

'We Can Achieve'

A History of Women in Sport at the University of Alberta

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EDITOR/AUTHOR Kate Lamont



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'We Can Achieve'

*A History of
Women in Sport at
the University of Alberta*

Dr. P. LINDSA

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Women in Sport
at the University of Alberta

EDITOR/AUTHOR Kate Lamont

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PREFACE

by Kate Lamont

Recording the history of women in sport at the University of Alberta was the idea of the Campus History Group of the U of A's Faculty Women's Club. The committee consists of five energetic women: Esther Kreisel, Muriel Affleck, Marianne Elder, Saretta Sparling and Pat Dobson. They gave themselves the task of conducting tape-recorded interviews of most of the thirty-four women whose voices are heard in this report. Most of the women's names were supplied by Professor Herb McLachlin of the Faculty of Physical Education at the University of Alberta, and the tapes were collected over a one-year period beginning in June of 1985.

It is always helpful, but often surprising, when five people engaged in one project can find a common sense of direction. This project, having so many possible directions, was an especially difficult one to envision in its complete form, but I believe the Campus History Group succeeded in doing so. From the outset, they wanted a history which would focus on the contributions of the U of A women, whether as teachers, coaches, academics, or performers, to the history of sport at the U of A and in the larger community. The committee also wanted to enlarge these women's stories—to place them in an historical context which would reveal the changes that have taken

place for women in both sport and society since the U of A opened in 1908. Finally, they wanted to look to the future and assess what trends were in progress, what women might wish or expect for their sporting lives, and what it might mean for them.

It is my own wish that the expectations of the Campus History Group for their project have been realized in this book.

PREFACE

by
President Myer Horowitz

'We don't need to make our history interesting. It is interesting.' (Vincent Massey, address at Fort Langley, B.C., November 19, 1958). The Faculty Women's Club, by capturing for us some of the contributions of women who have excelled in the field of sport at our university, have reminded us of this simple fact. It is important that we find ways to tell future generations of the parts that women have played in the development of our country and our institutions so that there is an increased appreciation of the position which they occupy in the creation of our heritage, our present, and our destiny. *We Can Achieve* captures a sense of the pioneering spirit which women at the University of Alberta have always exhibited. The thirty-four women who shared their time, their memories, and their feelings of pride about the University's sporting heritage, have helped each of us to remember how important our traditions, and the people who helped to forge them, are in providing the strength of our present.

It has not always been socially accepted that women should participate in vigorous sport. This is not surprising for it has not always been a social norm that women be enfranchised to vote, to hold public office, or to compete openly in the employment marketplace. The shaping of social change requires the courage to risk the wrath

of public criticism, the strength to persevere despite opposition. It is important today when many, but not all, of the battles for equality of sexes have been won, to pay tribute to the women of our University who have 'achieved' prominence of place in the fields of athleticism and who have gone on to broaden the basis of our culture all through their lives. This book, the result of the desire of the Campus History Group of the Faculty Women's Club to capture and share some of the contributions of women who have, in one way or another, been affiliated with the University of Alberta, stands as an important tribute to our pioneers in sport.

FOREWORD

*by Esther Kreisel,
Convenor,
Campus History Group*

The research into the history of women in sport at the University of Alberta was a project of the Campus History Group, an activity group of members of the Faculty Women's Club of the University of Alberta interested in researching campus history with emphasis on the contribution of women to the University of Alberta.

At no time did we intend to produce a detailed chronicle or analysis of the progress of women's athletics at the University of Alberta. By means of tape-recorded interviews we hoped to record the experiences and aspirations of individual women whose voices are heard in this report. The original thirty-two tape-recorded interviews have been deposited with the University of Alberta Archives and are available to interested researchers.

The Campus History Group is grateful to the senior members of the Faculty Women's Club, who sponsored us for a New Horizons grant which financed our project. We are also grateful to Professor Gerald Redmond of the Department of Physical Education and Sport Studies and Mr. James Parker, University Archivist, for their initial encouragement. Special thanks are also due to Professor Emeritus Herbert J. McLachlin, who suggested names of interviewees, to University of Alberta archivist Trude Bloor McLaren who helped identify the photographs, to mem-

bers of the Alumni Office staff who supplied us with names and addresses of graduates, and to Professor Patricia E. Prestwich of the Department of History, who sponsored Ms. Kate Lamont under a 'STEP' grant, so that she could undertake the research for our project.

We deeply appreciate the work of Kate Lamont, our Editor-Author, who placed the tape-recorded interviews into the proper historical context and who prepared a very readable account of our project, the history of women in sport at the University of Alberta.

Introduction

I found most of my teachers kind of antiquated. They were coming to the ends of their careers at the time....It was only later, when I was doing graduate work in the history of Phys Ed in Canada, that I realized how much these women were pioneers.¹

Ann Hall, a University of Alberta sport sociologist, was recalling her days as a Physical Education student at Queen's University. Today, she herself can be considered a pioneer in women's sports, as can numerous other women associated with Canada's universities. Among these institutions the University of Alberta has seen more than its share of women whose careers have made significant contributions in all fields related to sport.

Women who enjoy sport today probably have more opportunities, better facilities and greater social approval than they've ever had in Canada's short history of settlement. But theirs are the benefits won from long years of the evolution of women's sport in Canada. This evolution is documented in miniature in the history of the University of Alberta, and of the women associated with it, whether through the faculty or the student body. It is visible with just a glance through the pages of the now-defunct year-

¹M. Ann Hall, Taped Interview, 25 March 1986

book, *The Evergreen and Gold*. In editions of the 1920s, we have photographs of women's hockey, basketball and swim teams: Ursula McLatchie in a green and gold sweater, holding her stick for the camera, Inez Calhoun and Gladys Fry posing with a basketball in shooting position, Vera Palmer lined up with her teammates. Ethel Barnett, smiling in her track suit, set two varsity track records in the late twenties. Who are these women, and what can they tell us about the history of women's sport? In the edition of 1938, at the tail-end of the Depression, there is Mary Frost, again smiling, while 1940 brings us Jean Robertson, poised to receive a basketball, one foot slightly in front of the other. What is their place in this history?

And, of course, when one looks in the sports pages of the *Evergreen and Gold*, one sees Pandas year after year: Marion Irwin, Evelyn Silk, Ruby Anderson, Betty Fisher, Donna Huestis, Jean Harvie, Pat McCleary, Andrea Borys, Pat Jackson, June Coyle, Brenda Whitley, Trix Kannekens, Beverly Richard. These Pandas had coaches for their volleyball or basketball games: Audrey Carson, Pat Austin, Debra Shogan. There were also scores of other sporting women in other, less well-known sports. Kathleen McIntosh swam Lake Winnipeg, Juliet Sutton fenced in international company, Eileen Nicol played badminton, Gail Ross rode show jumpers. Still others went all the way to the Olympics, Sandy Hartley as a gymnast, Susan Natrass as a trap shooter. Gwen Smith coached all eight of her children in their early years, four of whom became Olympic swimmers. Some of these women are not in any yearbook, but their stories may be found in newspapers or personal recollections. Others have written about sport, their arguments contributing to the ongoing debate about women's issues in sports sociology, psychology, ethics, history, medicine and science: Ann Hall, Wendy Bedingfield, Katharine Moore, Andrea Borys. Still others, such as Elsie McFarland, made their marks as administrators. All of these women have made their particular contribution to the advancement of women's sport in Canada.

Some of these names are familiar; most, however, are unknown outside of the university that helped to develop them. Yet they deserve to be known, not simply because of the feats they have accomplished but also because their histories are also the histories of the university, of the development of physical education concepts, of social attitudes to sporting women, of the women's movement, of organized sport. Moreover, these women can tell us much about where women's sport has come from, where it is now, where it should be going.

Few gains were made without struggle in any decade since the university's opening in 1908. In the early years of the university, women athletes, on campus and off, had to cope with spartan facilities, untrained coaches and primitive equipment. Little was known before the seventies about sport-specific training and much is yet to be learned about nutrition, equipment technology and coaching techniques. Such obstacles, which might be said to constitute the growing pains of physical education, were to be expected and indeed were encountered by men and women alike. But women in particular shouldered other, more onerous, burdens in their quests to become superior sports figures. Myths about threats to 'femininity' and physical well-being prevented many women from playing the games at which they were best. School boards, athletic boards, private sponsors and anyone else with money for athletes too often ignored women in favour of their more glamorous male counterparts. In general, being a woman in sport often brought more stigma than honour, and many genuine accomplishments on the part of sporting women were by-passed by the mass media, for whom paying court to athletes is usually a full-time occupation. In Canada women's sport was—and is—seen as simply less important than that of men. Moreover, the domination by men of our society's business hierarchy has spilled over into athletic organizations; thus, sporting women have had only limited opportunities to make their needs known to

the sports world or to the community through high-level administrative positions.

With these hindrances in mind, we can better appreciate the standards realized by University of Alberta women in sport. Yet it might also be a simple matter to dismiss these triumphs. After all, what has sport got to do with most of us anyway?

In 1892, the *Edmonton Bulletin* had this to say about the importance of sport for school boys: 'It strengthens them and gives them pluck; it keeps them out of mischief and makes men of them.'² Although military-oriented drill and calisthenics were the most common forms of physical education in 1892, there was little doubt in the minds of most educators that bodily well-being and prowess in sport had fringe benefits for society as a whole. That assumption has undergone much modification and elaboration over the years, but its general tenor has remained the same. Participation in sports is thought to be 'good for' us and to make us 'good for' each other. It is almost universally believed to reinforce what we understand to be the desirable qualities of civilized human beings: a willingness to co-operate with others in order to achieve common goals coupled with a tenacity that strengthens and 'gives pluck' to the individual. The sport sociologist, Harry Edwards, entitled these assumptions about the benefits of sports the 'American sports creed.'³ The tenets of the creed included the idea that involvement in sport resulted in the development of good character, selfcontrol, tenacity and physical and mental fitness, qualities essential to success in everyday life. Although the relationship between their development and involvement in sport has yet to be proven conclusively, our society has, in general, ac-

²*Edmonton Bulletin*, quoted in Frank Cosentino and M.L. Howell *A History of Physical Education in Canada*. Don Mills, Ont: General Publishing, 1971), p. 24.

³see Harry Edwards, *The Sociology of Sport*. (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1973), Chapters Five and Ten.

cepted that the relationship is complementary. And if this is the case, women have a right to benefit from it.

Of course, so many voices mean that this history will be recounted from different perspectives. A women playing hockey in the 1920s will have different memories about her own history and that of sport in general than will a sport sociologist of the 1980s. Coaches and players will not emphasize the same problems and aspirations as administrators, and those whose feats are unusual by any sporting standards will have stories that are unique. It thus becomes critical to place these 34 individual histories—32 of which have been gleaned from taped interviews—into two contexts: that of the growth of women's sport in Western Canada and that of the women's own experiences in their chosen sports or sports-related careers.

The New Woman at the University of Alberta

The University of Alberta opened its doors for the first time in 1908, but it did not organize its sports program with other western universities until 1920, when the Western Canadian Intercollegiate Athletic Union was formed. This organization consisted of the Universities of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, with British Columbia joining in 1923. Competitive team sports for women were limited at this time to hockey and basketball, while individual excellence was measured in track and field tournaments in the spring and fall. University women's sports are first mentioned in the student newspaper, the *Gateway*, in 1915.

Canadian women themselves were more than ready to compete. By the turn of the century, they had indulged in bicycling, golf, lacrosse, hockey, tennis and even rifle shooting. They were 'New Women', interested in voting, higher education, sport, and, in some cases, full equality with men. And they intended to achieve these goals in new clothes whose design had been influenced by sport. The bicycle had popularized bloomers and 'bifurcated skirts'; golf had given them the golf suit. Most importantly, the example of women's playing hard at sports had made other women conscious of good health and exercise, both of

which were incompatible with the hoops, corsets, crinolines and 'sick headaches' of the Victorian era.

Helped along by the image of this 'New Woman', participation in sport by Canadian women saw a marked increase during the first two decades of the twentieth century.⁴ The Canadian sportswoman was generally of the middle and upper classes; sport had not yet been democratized to the point at which most working women were also pursuing sporting activities, but there were enough interested women for athletic leagues to be founded. As well, improved transportation made it easier for them to get to facilities, and, finally, universities began granting degrees to women. For many, it was in the institutional setting that they came into their first contact with organized sport and were thus able to become competent players and pioneers in establishing sport as part of a woman's domain.

It is in the pages of the *Evergreen and Gold*, first published in the 1923-24 term, that we meet most of the women whose personal victories, defeats, endeavours and aspirations form this history. Like most yearbooks, the *Evergreen and Gold* would win no prizes for the comprehensiveness of its information, but the photographs are inspiring; they encourage us to inquire about their subjects and about women's sport in the university and in our society.

Those outside the university in these early years might have considered the U of A women to have been a rather privileged lot. They had coaches, a gym, uniforms and some opportunity to travel. Former players remember their coaches with reverence, the trips to Winnipeg, Saskatoon and Regina with fondness, and the gym and uniforms with a good sense of humour. Five of the athletes from the University of Alberta's early history are of par-

⁴Jean Cochrane, Abby Hoffman and Pat Kincaid. *Women in Canadian Life: Sports* (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside Ltd. 1977), p. 35.

ticular interest. One played hockey. Her name is Ursula (McLatchie) Sterling, and she was born in Ontario but grew up in Calgary. Three others were basketball enthusiasts. Inez Calhoun, Vera (Palmer) Crockford and Gladys (Fry) Douglas all were members of the University of Alberta's intervarsity basketball teams in the early twenties. The last was versatile and competitive in everything she attempted. Ethel (Barnett) Cuts was a basketball teammate of Gladys Douglas's; she was also a record-breaking track star in intercollegiate meets. A look at their accomplishments will help to illustrate the position of women's sport in the early years of the university's history.

Inez Calhoun, Ursula Sterling and Vera Crockford played at a time when the importance of physical education was just being discovered and applied to education curriculae. They entered sports haphazardly, having virtually no facilities or coaching or management outside school or university, and minimal within. Sterling learned to skate as a child on the Elbow River in Calgary. After 'fooling around on the river'⁵ for some time, she joined a ladies' hockey team, and competed in Edmonton and Banff. Calhoun saw her first basketball hoop lying on the floor of the high school basement in Nakusp, B.C. She didn't play until university, although she recalls playing 'baseball with a tennis ball' in elementary school.⁶ Crockford remembers her first community 'hardball' team, the Red Sox, whose uniform consisted of their regular clothing, distinguished by identical red socks.⁷ The Red Sox had no coaching, learned the rules 'from watching men play' and once played a game where their only audience was the blacksmith and his dog. In her childhood, says Crockford, 'the vacant lot was the best facility.' Thus, in spite of the increased popularity of sports and the growing awareness of the benefits of physical education,

⁵Taped interview, Ursula Sterling, 9 April 1986.

⁶Taped interview, Inez Calhoun, 11 March 1986.

⁷Taped interview, Vera Crockford, 28 May 1986.

there was little in the way of facilities outside those organized by schools and especially by the university. The University of Alberta was a pioneer in incorporating physical education as part of a concept of education, while the women who took advantage of these early opportunities became models—living monuments to the rightness of the idea.

Hockey, a 19th century innovation, was quite an acceptable sport for women in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and both men's and women's teams were fielded on campus at least by 1915. Moreover, women's hockey was taken seriously. The *Gateway* reports:

They have played their game as the games are meant to be played and have demonstrated that neither sex has a monopoly of that fineness and keenness of sportsmanship that is called 'college spirit'.⁸

Inez Calhoun played from 1922-1924, when only 500 students were registered at the University of Alberta. Vera Crockford came from Victoria, where she had played basketball at normal school, mustering community women's teams with what money could be made by holding dances and bazaars. She enrolled at the University of Alberta in 1926 where, coached by Jimmy Bill and Clarence Husband (two volunteers), she joined the varsity team. Women's basketball was accorded the same respect by the *Gateway* as women's hockey. The *Gateway* summarizes a game between Varsity and the renowned Edmonton Grads:

For close checking, brilliant dribbling and phenomenal shooting the game was the equal, if not the superior, to any basketball game ever played in Edmonton....Varsity as a team turned in a wonderful performance.⁹

Their thrilling games with the University of Alberta were only a sampling of what the Grads offered spectators dur-

⁸*The Gateway*, Special Number, April, 1915, p. 50.

⁹Gateway staff. 'Great Basketball Game Saturday—Grads Win 21-15', *The Gateway*, 27 March 1924, p. 1.

ing their spectacular reign on the basketball courts. The team was formed by coach Percy Page in 1915 and was composed exclusively of graduates of McDougall Commercial High School in Edmonton. During a 25-year span, successive Grads contested 522 games and won 502 of them. They played exhibition matches at four Olympics, gaining four world titles; they won the North American championships seventeen times.¹⁰ But the contribution of the Edmonton Grads to the game of basketball and to women's sport was more than simply their unparalleled performance. Because of that performance, basketball became entrenched as a women's sport world-wide; when Inez Calhoun and Vera Crockford played at the University of Alberta, the game was at its zenith.

Only one Grad ever played on both the university women's team and the Grads'. She was Gladys (Fry) Douglas. A member of the Grads' squad for nine years (1927-1936), she accompanied the team to three of their four Olympics, played in 161 games and scored 1679 points. She was inducted into Canada's Basketball Hall of Fame in 1983, the Canadian Hall of Fame in 1971, and the University of Alberta's Sports 'Wall of Fame' in September of 1986.¹¹

Gladys Douglas was considered to be the star centre for the Grads. She held the same position for the university team, and when the two squads came together, she was juggled between them, each side needing her skills to hold off the advances of the other. In a game in February of 1929, for example, Douglas played three periods for Varsity, during which the Grads 'were not able to get going....in the impressive Grads style.'¹² The Grads, however, did manage to defeat Varsity 50-34. Vera Crockford,

¹⁰Cochrane et al, p. 45.

¹¹University of Alberta Department of Athletics, *Sports Wall of Fame Banquet Program*, 18 September 1986.

¹²*Gateway* staff, 'Varsity Basketball Girls Hold Grads to Close Score', *The Gateway*, 28 February 1929.

who played with Douglas wryly notes that Percy Page claimed Gladys 'because he didn't want to be beaten.'

Most of the women remembered little overt discrimination against them as women; the period 1920-1935 was, in many ways, a high point in women's sport in western Canada, a fact which can be attributed in large measure to the Grads' success. Yet the gulf between men's and women's sports—the tacit assumption, still visible today, that sport for men was of value and for women an unhealthy frivolity—had its beginnings during these formative years of organized school sport. Thus, the women in our story have conflicting memories of their sporting experiences. Vera Crockford felt that male and female athletes were equally encouraged at university and were given equal time in the gym. Ursula Sterling says that her team's ice time was respected, while Inez Calhoun does not remember being discouraged from participating in sports. But Sterling also feels that her classmates thought her to be 'different.' And women's hockey, she says, drew only handfuls of spectators while men's drew crowds. In basketball, Calhoun often played using 'girls' rules', which limited the movement of the defense and which were based on the assumption that 'girls' were too weak for the exertion enjoyed by men. Girls' rules were invented in 1899 with the idea of protecting the delicate health—particularly that of the reproductive organs—of the 'girls'. Their restrictiveness was enough to kill any game. The court was divided in three; there was an overabundance of players, each of whom was confined to her respective section. Moreover:

A player could not grab or strike the ball from another player's hands, hold it longer than three seconds or bounce it more than three consecutive times.... In other words the game allowed only brief, broken movements in a small space with too many people who couldn't touch one another.¹³

¹³Stephanie L. Twin, Ed., *Out of the Bleachers*. (Old Westbury, New York: The Feminist Press, 1979), p.xxxvi.

The experiences of the University of Alberta women help to illustrate the ambiguous place sport had in women's lives in general throughout the period. The myth of the Victorian 'ideal woman' was enjoying good health in all of North America and Britain. In this 19th century myth, the perfect woman was passive, obedient, delicate, innocent, conscious of her appearance and of proper behaviour. It is doubtful that many such women ever existed, particularly in pioneer western Canada. In the young prairie society of the 19th century women were not so passive nor so fragile that they couldn't ride horses or bicycles, while urban poor and rural women were forced to work long, hard hours. Moreover, at the turn of the century, more Canadian women joined the labour force and even began to enter professional ranks as teachers and nurses. Their vigorous work in these fields was a challenge to the myth of the delicate Victorian, as was the 19th century upper class club-woman and fox hunter. North American doctors took notice and began to recommend a certain amount of healthful exercise for women. Following World War I, the jazz age replaced the Victorian era and suddenly it seemed as though women might try anything, even flying across the Atlantic, as Amelia Earhart did successfully in 1928. Behind the daring, though, was always the question of how far the women could go before their 'femininity', morals or health gave way. Thus, when University of Alberta women played their sports, they did so with the blessing of jazz age, tempered with warnings from the Victorian past.¹⁴

In spite of the vote, higher education, the growing female industrial labour force and the bicycle, women in western Canada—in fact, in the western world—had definitely not been 'emancipated.' In the first place, suffragism had a distinctly conservative cast by the time it was

¹⁴Ellen W. Gerber. *The American Woman in Sport*. (Don Mills, Ontario: The Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1974), p. 19.

victorious. In both the U.S. and Canada, the suffragists won on a platform of 'maternal feminism'; that is, they emphasized that 'the nation was simply a macrocosm of the home.' And, since the rapidly industrializing world which was North America in the early 20th century inevitably affected the home and family, women believed that the vote would enable them to extend to government their maternal duties as protectors of the home and family. By the time most women had gained the vote, the radical feminists' call for equality had long been a spent force.¹⁵ Secondly, the 'New Woman' herself was partly mythological. No doubt the 1920s was an era of greater personal freedom for women, but the freedom to smoke cigarettes, indulge in sports or hold down a job did not make a dent in women's economic inequality, nor did it fundamentally change people's perceptions of 'women's role' in the society. A glance at the pages of a university yearbook tells us that women's enrollment was confined to 'appropriate' programs such as nursing; there were virtually no women in the faculties of medicine, dentistry or law, to name a few, until long after this 'bright' period of women's history had passed. Moreover, as had been the case throughout the Industrial Revolution in Britain as well as in Canada, women were employed in factories because their work was cheaper than that of males.¹⁶

Designers of school and university curriculae evidently were not anxious to change that situation, either. Universities, often considered breeding grounds of radicalism, are, in fact, the products of their social and political milieux. In the twenties, most reflected this position by introducing courses in domestic science, hygiene and eugenics, courses geared to the 16.3% of the

¹⁵see Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983)

¹⁶William Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 65.

1921 population of Canadian campuses which was female.¹⁷ These realities meant that unconventional role models were absent from the lives of young girls during the period. There were female nurses and teachers to emulate, but few engineers or doctors.¹⁸

The steadfast hold which traditional perceptions of sex roles had on Canadian and American society was also reflected in the popular culture. True, there existed in novels and films—and to a lesser extent in reality—the ‘flapper’, a sexual libertine who used birth control and advocated ‘free love’. But these were mere ‘shifts in manners and morals’; they did not challenge the sexual division of labour which kept women, at least in most people’s minds, confined to the home while men went to work. Other novels and other films reinforced social conservatism, featuring heroines giving up careers for marriage.¹⁹

Female athleticism in the twenties may have been a phenomenon akin to that of the flapper. Athletic rather than sexual libertines, the sporting women of this period expressed the ‘headlong striving for freedom’ of the flapper by rolling up their bloomers and playing sports; they did not, however, represent a challenge to prevailing social structures. In other words, the female athlete of the twenties, like the flapper, represented another ‘shift in manners and morals’, not an attempt to force society to re-evaluate its assumptions about women. Thus, she was admired, as was the working wife and the flapper, until the economic conditions of the Depression reinvigorated more conservative values.

Nevertheless, admiration for women athletes in the twenties was genuine. Their photos appeared on the sports pages with comments on the wealth of their physical

¹⁷Jill Vickers, ‘Women in the Universities’, Gwen Matheson, ed., *Women in the Canadian Mosaic*. (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1976), p. 204.

¹⁸Chafe, p. 99.

¹⁹*ibid*, p.96ff.

abilities and the seriousness of their sport. In one hockey game reported in the *Gateway*, for example:

Ursula McLatchie and Dorothy McNichol were very much on, and turned in a finished exhibition on defense. These girls were feminine Eddie Shores when they broke for the other goal. The forwards all played nice hockey, but it was in backchecking that they excelled.²⁰

The *Trail* described indoor athletics as a 'woman's forte.'²¹ And, in typical student newspaper rhetoric, preparations for another game were described:

Discarding their usual feminine ways and traits they will... skate forth to chase the elusive puck in no half-hearted fashion. The U of A girls will play a fierce to the finish game....Even the early hours have been shocked by the frantic training exercises carried on between 6 am and 8 am in the gym.²²

Apart from the residual Victorian myths about women, one important reason for the belief that sport was inappropriate for women lay in the military grounding of early physical education. A student of 1927-30, Ethel (Barnett) Cuts, notes that 'the whole physical education program at that time was definitely of a military nature.'²³ Teachers at summer school were officers of the military, and elementary school boys had cadet camps. The military presence was felt in the type of physical exercise deemed appropriate. Cuts called it 'the physical jerks,' a self-explanatory epithet. 'They wanted nice, clipped movements.' To this end, the university hired a sargeant to instruct the men.

²⁰*Gateway* staff, 'Varsity Girls Apply Whitewash to Monarchs'. *The Gateway* 26 February 1926, p. 1.

²¹*The Trail* staff, 'Varsity Sport', in *The Trail*, No. 10 (July, 1924), p. 20.

²²*Gateway* staff, 'Alberta Girls to Play Sask. Girls', in *The Gateway*, 31 January 1922, p. 1.

²³Taped interview, Ethel Cuts, 25 July 1985.

There was another reason as well. As women became more and more interested in games and sports, academics, psychologists, doctors and other 'qualified' professionals devised more and more comprehensive theories about why such interest might be detrimental. Combining a pseudo-scientific tone with an appeal to Victorian ideals, these notions were given the twin weapons of credibility and longevity. In the early era of modern sports, the first of them appeared with the bicycle craze which, doctors warned, might cause paralysis in the hands.²⁴ Ethel Cuts remembers another:

When I first left university there was a theory that seemed to come mainly from eastern universities...that women's bodies were very very precious and must be protected for the job for which they were made, mainly in bearing and rearing children. And so they were encouraged to wear protective girdles, and there was a lot of controversy about girls participating in truly vigorous sports.

Fortunately, such theories did not interfere with Cuts's career. Ethel Cuts was born in England, but moved to Edmonton before World War I. Following her graduation from Old Strathcona High School in 1927, she enrolled in science at the University of Alberta and joined the varsity basketball and track teams. She was probably luckier than her earlier contemporaries—Douglas, Sterling, Calhoun and Crockford—having engaged in some organized high school sports at Old Strathcona. Thus, when she enrolled at U of A, she would have been on firmer footing athletically.

As a university student, Cuts shone in both track and basketball. Although she claims that her first love was basketball, she was, according to the *Evergreen and Gold*,

²⁴M. Ann Hall, 'A History of Women's Sport in Canada Prior to World War I'. Unpublished MA thesis, University of Alberta, 1968, p. 91.

'a marvelous sprinter and jumper,'²⁵ and won the first Bakewell Trophy which at that time went to the high point performer in intercollegiate competition. Among her achievements as a university athlete were two track records, one for the women's 220 yards and one for the high jump which was a best for the province. The first stood for many years and was finally eclipsed by one of Cuts's students. The second, however, was short-lived, bested on the same day by Gladys Douglas!

Thus, theories about the frailty of women's reproductive organs were not a deterrent to an athlete who was probably much more aware—and confident—of her potential than any expert. But their lack of influence on Ethel Cuts notwithstanding, such theories served as much as anything to engender negative reactions to athletic women. Such ideas were also intertwined with doubts about the 'femininity' of women athletes. For example, when the American Babe Didrikson was dominating track and field events and other sports from 1930 onwards, some saw fit to question her estrogen levels, believing her endocrine make-up to resemble that of a man.²⁶ These ideas found their way to Canada and into its universities and had their effects on aspiring female athletes. As Canada was sending its first women athletes to the summer Olympics in Amsterdam in 1928, 'Canadian doctors were attending a special colloquium to discuss the future of Olympic events for women, arguing against the suitability of sports for women and women for sports.'²⁷

These attitudes are probably not unfamiliar to many modern sportswomen. What may be less readily understood today, though, are the limitations in coaching, facilities and equipment which hindered all athletes in the formative years of organized sport. Most of the early wom-

²⁵*Evergreen and Gold*, 1927, p. 28

²⁶John A. Lucas and Ronald A. Smith, 'Women's Sport: A Trial of Equality', *Her Story in Sport*, Reet Howell, Ed. (West Point, N.Y.: Leisure Press, 1982), p. 251.

²⁷Cochrane et al, p. 41.

en's coaches were volunteers with other jobs; one of these, Red McLean, was a student, while Cecil Race, who coached basketball with enough dedication and skill to have a women's intercollegiate trophy named in his honour in 1924, was a bursar. The coaches had a range of duties. Inez Calhoun recalls that Cecil Race accompanied the team to Winnipeg and Regina for a tournament as both coach and chaperone, while others had to help their teams raise money for tournaments and uniforms. Many of these coached both men's and women's teams in several different sports.

But Sterling points out that 'the coach didn't really teach us how to play.' Inez Calhoun mentions that he 'outlined plays' but that she was never 'taught how to throw a basketball or anything else.' This seeming lapse of coachly duties is understandable, though. Throwing basketballs or manoeuvring on skates with a stick has been developed to a high art in our era of lavishly-funded studies of sportscience, sportsmedicine and sports-specific training. Most sports fans are at least somewhat familiar with the advanced technology of sports and can recognize talent not only as a kind of physical magic possessed by certain individuals but also as a function of the careful nurturing of certain muscle groups combined with meticulous attention to the technical aspects of a given game. We take for granted the high degree of systematization of team and individual sports. Ursula Sterling and Inez Calhoun developed their talents simply by practising and playing; their respective coaches would certainly have recognized those talents, but the technical knowledge to develop them to their fullest simply did not exist.

And since it was unknown it probably was not very much missed and did not detract from the competitiveness of the women or the fun of the games. 'We worked hard,' recalls Sterling. 'You have to have a will to win or you wouldn't play.' At the same time, though, the cutthroat competitiveness that we so readily associate with modern sports was decidedly absent in the 1920s. Hockey players, for example, didn't wear masks, but Sterling doesn't

recall the game ever being rough enough to warrant that kind of protection.

Lack of technical knowledge resulted in some interesting strategies. Vera Crockford remembers a game against a city league in Victoria in which one of her teammates had long hair. 'She would swish it in the opponent's face,' laughs Crockford. 'We won lots of games that way.'

The kind of equipment the women used in university sports often reflected Victorian moral standards more than the practical requirements of the game. Basketball, says Calhoun, was played in bloomers of blue serge pleated 'all the way down' and tucked in at the bottom. 'They must've been yards around.' Calhoun later used her bloomers to make trousers for her young children—and got two pairs of trousers out of one bloomer leg! Vera Crockford remembers playing basketball in a Victoria normal school (the equivalent of teachers' college). To satisfy the prevailing standards of propriety for young ladies, the players had to keep their bloomers below knee-length. If knees showed on any girl, the game was forfeited. But, says Calhoun, bloomers gradually became shorter over the years, finally rolled up to thigh height so that they looked almost like shorts.

Cumbersome as they sound, the bloomers didn't necessarily hinder the players a great deal (Calhoun claims that they weren't difficult to move around in) and, in fact, were responsible for liberating late nineteenth century women from the type of clothing that did restrict serious physical activity. Bloomers were the invention of one Amelia Bloomer, an American feminist lecturer and writer of the mid-nineteenth century, who found them more practical for muddy streets than traditional women's clothing. But she was ahead of her time, and the odd culotte that bears her name was not put to general use until forty years later when, to the horror of moral conservatives, it became the article of clothing that would allow women to ride astride on bicycles without embarrassment.²⁸

²⁸M. Ann Hall, 'A History...', p. 90.

Apparently female hockey players were less constrained than those who played basketball. While ladies' hockey attire before 1920 often consisted of sweaters, long skirts, padded gloves and toques, by 1922 the skirts had given way to jodhpurs, padded shorts and knee stockings. In their yearbook photographs, Sterling and her teammates do not seem so very different in appearance from modern players, except that they are women.

There were limited opportunities for intercollegiate or inter-city play among women's teams in the twenties, the university providing enough money only for the bare necessities of hotel rooms, food and train tickets. But the travel was rewarding and fun in most cases. Calhoun recounts one special trip:

We stayed in a hotel in Winnipeg....They had beautiful accommodation for us...The cars were waiting to take us out to our games and they even arranged a boyfriend for each one of us....There was supper and a dance at the Fort Garry Hotel....The University of Manitoba paid for our accommodation and some of our meals and what entertainment there was....

Normally the teams were chaperoned, sometimes by the coach and sometimes by interested female staff from the university. Occasionally, before departing for a game, the women players were placed briefly under the tutelage of Florence Dodd, a long time U of A women's adviser who is credited with taking personal responsibility for the welfare of innumerable female students on the campus. Crockford, though, remembers some of her advice that wasn't taken:

Miss Dodd had us all in for tea and then she presented us with something....She says, 'now I know you girls are all apt to forget such things so I'm going to give you this before you leave.' It was a large bottle of cascara!

Ursula Sterling, Inez Calhoun, Vera Crockford, Gladys Douglas and Ethel Cuts were pioneers in university

women's sport, and their enthusiastic play exemplified the spirit of the New Woman of the twentieth century. As the decades passed and conservative attitudes toward sporting women were once again in the ascendant, the example of these women and others like them would help keep female initiative for sport aflame in Canada.

*Sporting Women
During Depression
and War*

The jazz age gave way to the Depression and, ten years later, World War II. Both phenomena brought changes to women's lives and women's sport. The Depression eroded the veneer of social tolerance towards personal and economic freedom for women, leaving behind the persistent reality of the sexual division of labour. This odious reality was bolstered by public and official tut-tutting at those females who, usually through economic necessity, desired to join the labour force or to pursue a career. With so many family breadwinners out of work, it was felt, jobs for women simply meant further and unnecessary competition.

In sport, the emergence of professional hockey and football widened the gulf in perceptions of the importance of sport for men and women, while the results of 'scientific' studies were invoked to 'prove' that untoward physical exertion led to women's biological and psychological dysfunction. But other studies, attesting to the lack of fitness among Canadians, engendered government-sponsored physical education programs which enhanced the sporting experiences of both males and females—at least in the public school systems and universities—throughout the Depression and war years.

The Depression was followed by World War II, another great disruptive force in Canadian life, and a watershed in women's history. It put women to work in unprecedented numbers and at unprecedented tasks, thus providing a nucleus for change in social attitudes to working women. This change would not be visible for several years, however, and was certainly not reflected in attitudes to sporting women during wartime. At the University of Alberta, though, female students who wanted to participate usually found a way even though their opportunities to do so were fewer than those of males.

From the late twenties to the end of World War II, community, school and university sports achieved a much higher degree of organization. Urban schools improved athletic facilities for most grades, although rural schools seem to have remained rather poor and under-organized. Accounts of childhood in rural areas during this period indicate that organized sport had not advanced much beyond Vera Crockford's portrait of the Red Sox. There were no YMCAs and not much interest in team play at the elementary level. For many country children, 'kick the can' and 'anti-eye over the coal shed' had to suffice unless they left for the city.

Larger centres provided good models for the towns, and the changes that occurred there reflected new approaches to physical education. The program entitled 'Physical Culture and Military Training', which had been endorsed by the Alberta government in 1912 for teacher training, gradually fell out of favour, and was finally supplanted by *The Syllabus of 1919*. The difference between the two lay in emphasis on military drill. Ironically, drill as a form of physical training began to decline during the Great War, when women took over the task of teaching physical education from military personnel who were occupied with the war effort, and shifted the emphasis to the physical culture component of the curriculum. Drill was never entirely absent, a fact to which Ethel Cuts has already attested, but was deemed less critical to physical

education in Alberta than participation in games and instruction in hygiene, anatomy and physiology. One historian credits the shift of emphasis from military training to the idea of 'physical enculturation' with enabling the western provinces 'to make great strides in the development of physical education in the postwar period.'²⁹ These strides were to culminate in the complete reorganization of physical education into a department in 1946, but the philosophy was in place in the 1920s. A 1924 account in the *Gateway* outlines it thus:

The prime justification for the fostering of different phases of athletics among the members of our student body, in addition to, and often as a substitute for, systematized drill and physical training exercises, is the claim that such is an integral part of a complete educational scheme. If we grant this, we must accept the responsibility for seeing that the greatest possible number of students benefit by a share in this form of student activity.³⁰

Meanwhile, philosophies of physical education in Canada were being concretized in government programs. Among these, the great innovation was the Provincial-Recreation Programme (Pro-Rec) of British Columbia. Pro-Rec was a product of the Depression. In its attempt to train the unemployed in new job skills, federal government coordinators discovered an alarming lack of fitness among the trainees. To ameliorate the situation, they introduced exercise and sport into the program; this combination was adopted by the government of British Columbia and became the foundation of Pro-Rec. The goal was to produce 'healthy, useful, cultural [sic] citizens',³¹ fit for work and

²⁹Cosentino and Howell, p. 40.

³⁰*Gateway* staff, 'Girls Asked to Help Interest Men in Sport'. *The Gateway*, 24 February, 1924, p. 3.

³¹I. Eisenhardt, 'Canada's National Physical Fitness Programme', *Ontario Library Review and Canadian Periodical Index*, 29:303, August 1945, quoted in James L. Gear, 'Factors Influencing the Development of

play, who would not be demoralized through the 'dangerous effects' of idleness imposed by unemployment. Thus, the connection between fitness and social harmony was made and given official sanction by one provincial government after another, Alberta's answer being the Youth Training Program of 1937.³² Pro-Rec in turn fostered the development of the National Physical Fitness Act in 1943, whose purpose was to develop in Canadian citizens their 'spiritual, moral, mental and physical' fitness, and of course to enable more of these citizens to pass muster for military service.³³

Nothing serves to illustrate the tenuousness of women's freedom in the twenties more than the Depression. The most memorable legacy of that period no doubt has to be the enormous queues of unemployed outside of soup kitchens and other sources of temporary relief. The high unemployment rate throughout North America resulted in fierce competition for jobs, and the first to be deliberately excluded from the job market were women. In both Canada and the U.S., public opinion, as well as that of government and organized labour, was solidly opposed to women's 'competing with men who have families to support,' as one congresswoman put it.³⁴ The assumption was that women's wages amounted to 'pin money' and that women had no business working for that purpose. This attitude was held by women as well; in 1936 a Gallup Poll revealed that 76% of the female respondents disapproved of married women's working.³⁵ Governments in both countries legislated married women back into the home, the Canadian government forbidding their

Government Sponsored Physical Fitness Programmes in Canada from 1850 to 1972', *Canadian Journal of the History of Sport and Physical Education* IV, 2(Dec. 1973), p. 16.

³²Gear, p. 17.

³³*ibid*, p. 18.

³⁴Chafe, p. 107.

³⁵*ibid*, p. 111.

employment in the federal civil service.³⁶ By 1940, 'the percentage of females at work was almost exactly what it had been in 1910.'³⁷

It is difficult to say how women's sport might have fared on campus without the rise of male-dominated professional sports, heralded by the construction of Maple Leaf Gardens, at the height of the Depression in 1931. Before sport became commercialized, universities had dominated the national sporting scene. Since the advent of professional football and hockey, however, the role of the universities became that of 'nursery' for aspiring professionals, and the professionals were all men. In this context one can realize why the efforts of university women athletes were seen as less important than those of their male counterparts. Athletically they had nowhere to go once they had graduated from university, except into the relative anonymity of the school system as physical education teachers and amateur coaches. They also had little outside sponsorship, the publicity essential to continued sponsorship being channelled into the professional ranks.³⁸

At the University of Alberta sport became an increasing source of pride. The university recognized its athletes' achievements at awards nights; it also gave them new opportunities in the form of the wider variety of sports that were being made available, volleyball and archery being added to the roster of women's activities. Yet, while it was awarding 'White Blazers' to outstanding women athletes it was also allowing the chasm between men's and women's sports to remain. And, as sport was pursued with increasing intensity, the chasm widened, in schools and

³⁶Marg E. MacLellan, 'A History of Women's Rights in Canada', in *Cultural Tradition and Political History of Women in Canada: Studies of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women* = 8(Ottawa: Information Canada, 1971), p. 25.

³⁷Chafe, p. 135.

³⁸Cochrane et al, p. 51.

communities as well as in universities. Indeed, the official blessing of women's sport was much less than whole-hearted, and the women's enthusiasm for these sports was assaulted piece-meal by both rhetoric and policy. On campus, female athletes travelled less frequently than did males. By one account, the men's games would take them each year to Winnipeg and Saskatoon, while the women had to be content with a train trip to Saskatoon every second year.³⁹ As well, the University of Alberta campus had two gyms, a large, converted hangar called the Drill Hall plus the tiny Athabasca gym. The men practised and played in the Drill Hall, the women in the gym. Lastly, the adulation accorded them in the twenties by the *Gateway* and the *Evergreen and Gold* was fading almost into non-existence while male students' football and hockey received pages and pages of coverage. Outside of Canada's universities critics were still questioning the appropriateness of sport for women's physical well-being and for their 'femininity'.⁴⁰ The 'morality' of sport for women had also been discussed, especially in the United States. As early as 1923, Mrs. Herbert Hoover discovered, to her shock, that girls were performing in front of men in their functional but abbreviated basketball uniforms. She found this 'disgraceful' and managed to have girls' sports abolished in several states.⁴¹ In sum, then, women's sport was coming to be regarded by many—and many with voices either loud or influential—as immoral, unfeminine, unhealthy and unimportant. And the University of Alberta was not without blame for furthering these viewpoints.

In spite of these drawbacks, there was left over from the jazz age one powerful and positive model for female athletes—the Edmonton Grads. At the same time as the Victorian reaction to the athletic libertines of the twenties

³⁹Taped interview, Jean Robertson, 10 June 1985.

⁴⁰*ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴¹Bil Gilbert and Nancy Williamson, 'Sport is Unfair to Women', *Sports Illustrated*, 38:21(28 May 1973), p. 95.

was curtailing their sport, the Grads were winning over 500 games. This feat, along with the balance of their record—the four world championships and seventeen North American championships—left their mark on university women. According to one university basketball player:

In basketball, the fact that the Edmonton Grads were so internationally famous when men's teams were nowhere left us with a legacy. We felt, 'we can achieve', and from that point of view I have never encountered a situation where the opportunity to play did not exist.⁴²

The opportunities did exist on campus, and the women continued to play.

In order to see how university women fared under these less than ideal conditions, we will examine the sporting lives of four of them and try to discover how they perceived their situation and what they did to improve upon it. The women whose sports careers developed during this relatively quiet period in the history of women's sport and whose pictures appear in various editions of the *Evergreen and Gold*, are Mary (Frost) Gander, Jean Robertson, Evelyn Silk and Marion Irwin.

What Mary Gander and Jean Robertson recall most vividly were childhoods scarred by Depression poverty. For them, sport became a medium for making friends and productive use of leisure time. Equipment, however minimal, was available through the school system, and games were an inexpensive route to social contact. In Jean Robertson's words:

...Because of the Depression no one had any money to do things so we used the equipment that was supplied by the schools and if it didn't cost money we did it....When I came to University on the proverbial shoe-string I wouldn't have had any social entrance if it hadn't been for sports.⁴³

⁴²Taped interview, Evelyn Silk, 26 June 1986.

⁴³Taped interview, Jean Robertson, 10 June 1985.

Mary Gander was born in Calgary in 1917 and came to Edmonton in 1936.⁴⁴ She remembers being a somewhat underweight child who was provided with milk in elementary school. She was a sports enthusiast from an early age and was lucky enough to live near a public park in Calgary which, like Vera Crockford's vacant lot, became the arena for a childhood of street sports: tag rugby, 'scrub' baseball, cricket and soccer. Track 'training' consisted of running to and from school. On the whole, Gander remembers more sports being available to her, in spite of the Depression, than do Inez Calhoun and her contemporaries. Other things had changed, too. For example, she wore bloomers until Grade 10; afterwards, however, these gave way to shorts, while city park play was improved through the services of a real coach in high school, a woman who had played on university teams. This start left her better prepared to play a good game at the University of Alberta in the 1930s, and after enrolling she turned out for basketball as soon as it was announced. She participated at the intercollegiate level for two years, receiving encouragement from her coach, Jake Jamieson, and taking advantage of the one opportunity per year to travel to Saskatoon for intervarsity matches with the Huskiettes. Her team won two of those matches, while her own performance was superb enough to help earn her the 'White Blazer' in the 1938-39 term. The *Gateway* called her part of 'a high scoring front line capable of travelling the full forty minutes at top speed.' As well as being an active athlete, Gander also channelled some of her energies into administrative work, serving as an executive of the University Women's Athletic Association.

Jean Robertson also won the White Blazer, having played on the U of A team against the Edmonton Grads. She was an active member of the team from 1937 to 1941, and also coached intramural basketball and volleyball. Lastly, she, like Gander, served on the Women's Athletic

⁴⁴Taped interview, Mary Gander, 24 January 1986.

Association. During the time of Gander and Robertson, the White Blazer was awarded for those female athletes who were active both on the courts as coaches and players and at administrative tasks.⁴⁵ It was the major athletic award granted to women at the time, and was awarded on 'Colour Night' along with academic and other awards.

Mary Gander had graduated and Jean Robertson was still a university student when World War II broke out in 1939. Canada almost immediately joined Britain's war effort, and the Depression, already on the wane in the late thirties, came to an abrupt halt with the growth of war industries. It was the war industries which put women back to work. And World War II did more for women workers than simply increase their numbers. With the draining of manpower to the front, more and more married and middle-aged women were employed and, for the first time, masses of women were learning nontraditional trades such as welding fuselages and assembling navigation systems.⁴⁶ Moreover, in the absence of men, women also became more involved in educational, community and political affairs.⁴⁷ But, as one historian has noted, these changes were paradoxical; the increased economic opportunities for women did not lead to a reassessment of women's 'place' in Western society, nor to significant improvement in areas of concern to working women, particularly day care and minimum wage scales. Instead, the post-war period encouraged an 'anti-feminist backlash' in which women were herded back to the home to follow traditional roles as 'feminine' housewives and mothers and to take up a new one as well, that of sex object. The public attitude favouring these roles is once again evinced in the popular culture. Radio soap operas featured women in

⁴⁵Jean Robertson, letter to Trude Russel, University of Alberta Archivist, 19 February 1985.

⁴⁶Chafe, p. 141.

⁴⁷Susan Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publications, 1982), p. 210.

domestic surroundings, often caring for a stricken returned veteran.⁴⁸ The 'sweatergirl', a prelude to Marilyn Monroe, first appeared in 1943; the same year, a *McCall's* survey revealed that women believed their 'place' to be in the home.⁴⁹

Women continued to tackle their chosen sports with the same kind of enthusiasm, although women's hockey was 'put out of its misery' at the University of Alberta in 1938, following several years of declining interest on the part of potential players. There were plenty of sports remaining, however, as the *Gateway* noted in 1941:

This year, said the president of the Women's Athletic Association, more girls have participated in intramurals than ever before, and it is our aim to get every girl on campus interested in some sport.... Girls [can] choose from golf, track, tennis, badminton, basketball, volleyball, archery, swimming and skiing.⁵⁰

By the mid-forties, women's basketball had long been established as a permanent fixture in U of A athletics: the female Golden Bears. But the women's teams were nameless, *Gateway* accounts of games referring to the Bears as the Bears and the women players as 'hoopsters'. It was obviously due time to ratify the women's teams' existence with a name. The choices seem to have been 'Golden Pandas' (possibly regarded as being too cumbersome), 'Teddy Bears' (obviously too insipid in the immediate post-Grads era), 'Bruinettes' (perhaps thought to sound too much like 'brunettes'), and 'Panda'. Pandas they became; the name was settled in February of 1945 and was even accompanied by a mascot, a plaid, vest-clad stuffed bear named 'Pandy'.⁵¹

⁴⁸ibid, p. 196.

⁴⁹ibid, p. 200.

⁵⁰*Gateway* staff, 'Athletic Heads Pledge Full Programme of Intervarsity Sport Next Term if Possible', *The Gateway*, 25 March 1941, p. 6.

⁵¹*Gateway* staff, 'Girls' Team to be Known as Pandas', *The Gateway*, 22 February 1945, p. 8.

Evelyn Silk, who enrolled at the U of A just before the war's conclusion, was one of the first Panda stars, playing on the intercollegiate team for three years in a row. At five feet, four inches, she was about average height for female basketball players in the 1940s; she played guard and, according to the *Gateway*, her good shooting made her 'the team's set-shot artist.'⁵² She played basketball on the first 'Women's Weekend', which had been organized with the intention of keeping women from taking a back seat to men in the traditional 'double headers':

In the past, it seems that the Women's Intercollegiate sports have consistently occupied the bottom rung of the competitive athletic ladder. However, the long advocated necessity for woman representation on intercollegiate sport slates in Western Canada has at last become a reality. With the inauguration of a Women's Weekend, the outlook, as far as feminine sports is concerned is, at present, particularly bright.⁵³

In actuality, however, the Women's Weekends may have had the effect of reducing spectators' involvement in women's athletics. Because male sport was achieving new heights of publicity and popularity through professional hockey and football, the crowds that might have seen women play, even though they had come for the male half of the double header, missed that exposure once the Women's Weekends had completely segregated female athletes. Consequently, University of Alberta women's athletics might have suffered from the good intentions of the organizers.

For Evelyn Silk the spectator-appeal of her sport does not seem to have mattered a great deal. Nor, she says, did winning or losing the Cecil Race trophy ('emblematic of western women's basketball supremacy'⁵⁴ 'Just playing

⁵²*Gateway* staff, 'Coeds Hold First Sports Weekend', *The Gateway*, 21 January 1949, p. 3.

⁵³*The Evergreen and Gold*, Vol. 48(1948), p. 226.

⁵⁴*Gateway*, 'Coeds', 21 January 1949, p. 3.

was a high point,' she remarks. 'In those days...we [didn't] really look at it as a career, [although] we wanted to be as good as we could be.'

Silk was fortunate to attend schools having good facilities for play and practise, but until she enrolled in the certificate program at the University of Alberta, she hadn't realized that 'special training was needed to coach.' At university, she became intrigued with coaching and, following her award-winning basketball years, she studied movement theory in England and embarked on what was to become a thirty-year long career in teaching and coaching.

Marion Irwin did not enjoy the benefits of organized school sports to the same extent as did Gander, but she did discover the Lethbridge YMCA as a teenager.⁵⁵ It was co-ed, and Irwin enrolled in swimming and gym lessons, earning a life-saving certificate by Grade 11. As an adult, she enrolled at Edmonton Normal School and followed that with a degree program at the University of Alberta in 1946. While she doesn't recall specific discrimination against women, apart from the smaller gym, she claims that the provincial organization for track ignored ordinary participants in favour of outstanding athletes, possibly a situation stemming from the rapidly growing national obsession with professional sport. At one point, Irwin was asked to participate in a track meet but could not afford to do so.

Nevertheless, she was able to participate in several university sports, including track and basketball, and she was also an energetic organizer of intramurals for women. Her expertise as a player and organizer was useful when she became a high school physical education teacher and coached basketball, volleyball, swimming and track. The same expertise won her a ten-year service award from the Red Cross plus a major athletic award from the university.

⁵⁵Taped interview, Marion Irwin, 11 March 1986.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of these four women is to be found in their example. This aspect cannot be underestimated; after all, they pursued their interests in the midst of attitudes that proclaimed women who liked sport to be unfeminine. A 1939 study provides a good example of a source of these attitudes. Using a 'Masculinity-Femininity Quotient Test', an American psychologist claimed that female athletes responded the 'least femininely' to the questions.⁵⁶ Other debates of the period also centred on the 'masculinity' question, while rebuttals could often do no better than point out how pretty and graceful some female athletes were, without a single reference to performance.⁵⁷ It was not easy for women to engage in sport when doing so put their sexuality into question. To go on to become coaches, as three of the women did, must have taken a rare degree of strength, confidence and perseverance, all qualities to inspire the young women they went on to instruct. Furthermore, these women were competent athletes, which was no small advantage to their students. Physical education in the public schools—particularly that for girls—was often taught by people with no training, experience or enthusiasm for what they were supposed to be doing. The enthusiasm of women such as Mary Gander, Jean Robertson, Evelyn Silk and Marion Irwin attests to both the necessity and the advantages of improved opportunities for physical education graduates during a period of conservative opposition to women in sport.

⁵⁶Twin, *Bleachers*, p. xxxv.

⁵⁷see Frederick Griffin, 'Girls, Is Sport Good for You?', *The Toronto Star Weekly*, 31 March 1934, p. 3.

*Pandas in the
Post-War Years*

The interim between World War II and the reawakening of the women's movement in the mid-sixties was one of quiescence for women in both sport and North American society in general. In spite of the influx of women into the labour force during the war years, the immediate post-war period saw a 'back to the home' movement, where women were urged to give up their jobs in deference to the thousands of returning veterans. Fear of recession and unemployment along with the sense of social dislocation and insecurity brought about by the war were two factors whetting the public's discontent with wives who held jobs.⁵⁸ Public opinion was bolstered by that of 'expert' psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists, who touted the virtues of motherhood and of feminine passivity and subservience. None of these trends was beneficial to women in sport, and the period is noteworthy for the dearth of feminine achievement in athletics. From 1952 to 1964, only one Summer Olympic medal was won by a Canadian woman, this a bronze taken by Irene Macdonald for diving in 1956. The winter games were more lucrative for Canadian women; they won eight medals from 1948 to 1964. Six of these were won by skaters, the other two by

⁵⁸Hartmann, p. 208.

alpine skiers. These sports, plus diving, emphasize the grace and beauty of the female performer rather than her physical powers, and are indicative of social attitudes to sport for women during this period. Sports showing off a woman's beauty were 'appropriate', while those displaying her strength were absolutely taboo.⁵⁹

Thus, two contradictory realities existed in the beginning of the post-war period. On the one hand, women of all ages and marital statuses had penetrated the job market as never before, and continued to do so into the fifties. On the other hand, advertisers, educators, psychologists and the popular culture reiterated a set of ideas handed down from the 19th century Victorians, which Betty Friedan would later coin 'the feminine mystique' and which claimed, like the Victorian ideal, that women found true happiness in servitude to men. The first reality laid the foundation for the slow changes in attitudes towards women which came to the fore in the late sixties, while the second accounts for the public quiescence of women in the fifties.

At the University of Alberta, female athletes who had played during the Depression and the war had come on the sporting scene perhaps a few years too soon; physical education was about to undergo a revolution that would establish the Edmonton campus as a world class facility for both the physical and the academic aspects of physical education. At the heart of this revolution was Maurice Lewis Van Vliet, appointed director of the Department of Physical Education in 1945, and his contention that physical education was an academic discipline and should be organized as such. He expressed this idea in a *Gateway* article concerning sport during wartime.

We plan to promote opportunities for mental expression, encourage creative thinking and develop personality, and do not believe in training our young

⁵⁹Cochrane et al, p. 60.

people to memorize a few set exercises....University students should not be forced to educate the physical but should be educated through the physical.⁶⁰

Under his tutelage and that of a small but competent staff which included Tessa Johnson (Allen), Richard Hughes, Don Smith, Patricia Austin and Herb McLachlin, the Department of Physical Education was established, organized, developed and reorganized. The direction taken by Van Vliet was to have a profound outcome for sport—both men's and women's—in the university and in the province at large.

It was also at this time that teacher education was transferred from normal schools to the university and became its Faculty of Education. Through this new faculty, the Department of Physical Education was able, in 1950, to offer its first degree program, the Bachelor of Education in Physical Education. It was a unique program; its graduates were to be 'qualified as teachers in other subjects besides Physical Education.'⁶¹ A range of courses was offered through the new program, including 'Philosophy, Physiology, Education, Bacteriology, Applied Anatomy and Kinesiology, Care of Athletic Injury,...Athletic Coaching and Officiating.'⁶² The program was also to include 'activity labs' designed to 'give students a thorough knowledge of most athletic activities, and [to] enable them to be 'experts in a few sports''', according to Van Vliet.⁶³

We now turn to the 1957 edition of the *Evergreen and Gold*, whose sport section pictures the '57 Panda basketball team seated in a smiling semi-circle. Ruby Anderson is their coach; apart from her, four other women on that

⁶⁰M.L. Van Vliet, 'University Sport During Wartime', *The Gateway*, 1 December 1942, p. 4.

⁶¹*Gateway* staff, 'U of A Offers New Phys. Ed. Course', *The Gateway*, 31 October 1950, p. 4.

⁶²*Gateway* staff, 'Physical Education Course for Alberta', *The Gateway*, 8 February 1946, p. 1.

⁶³*Gateway*, 'U of A Offers', 31 October 1950, p. 4.

team are part of this story. They are Betty Jean Harvie, Pat (McCleary) Meadus, Donna (Huestis) Enger and Betty Jean Fisher. These women stand out not only for the awards they accumulated in their brief university athletic careers but also for how they used the specialized knowledge that the Department of Physical Education's new program was offering.

Ruby Anderson became a long-time coach and teacher. Working with 'the bare necessities' of facilities, training and equipment, she received good coaching help from school teachers (for whom coaching was always an 'extra') and, at the university, from Herb McLachlin. The University of Alberta gave her the opportunities she needed, although like her teammate of the late forties, Evelyn Silk, she notes that coaching and conditioning were not very specialized—one still conditioned oneself through playing. Anderson played well enough with the Pandas to win the Bakewell Trophy in 1950, the trophy which had first been awarded to Ethel Cuts in 1928, and which had been endowed in 1948 as the award for the top female athlete of the year at the U of A.

Anderson was described by the *Gateway* as a hard-working player. She continued to work hard as a teacher and coach at the university and at Victoria Composite High School from 1956 to 1981. At the University of Alberta she coached Panda basketball for nine years, while at Victoria Composite High School she was a coach of basketball, volleyball, softball and track and field from 1950 to 1956. She also taught Physical Education at both institutions for a total of thirty-one years.

The developments in physical education, along with the legacy of the Grads, were also helpful to enthusiastic women like Betty Jean Fisher, a high school graduate of 1953 who continued at the University in the Bachelor Education in Physical Education program. Her career in organized sport began in junior high school where she played basketball, volleyball and softball, these team sports helping her to develop 'the element of co-operation'

to complement an athlete's natural competitiveness.⁶⁴ While she remembers some summertime play, she credits the school system with making her involvement possible; it was, she says, 'the source of organization.' At the University of Alberta she continued in basketball and volleyball, collecting not only a degree upon her graduation, but the Bakewell Trophy as well. Sports served her well; she remembers no setbacks, one wonderful trip to Quebec City for the Canada Winter Games in 1967, and since graduation she has taught and coached at five successive Edmonton high schools. Her training gave her and other physical education graduates vital skills that would have implications for young women wishing to pursue athletics. Fisher was a first, a teacher whose specialized physical education courses gave her higher qualifications for teaching adolescents how to play than had ever before been possible. Moreover, she, too, was a role model for young girls who might want to use their playing ability as a foundation for careers as coaches. The university's new program made the training and games experience possible, according to its intentions:

It should not only provide leaders in [recreation] for the Province of Alberta, but should improve the level of instruction and supervision in such a way that thousands of school children will be affected in matters of swimming,...co-ordination, poise and grace, recreational skills and growth and development generally.⁶⁵

Women such as Betty Jean Fisher put their training to useful and admirable practise. Fisher, like Anderson, was not just a teacher. The majority of Physical education teachers in 1957 were also automatically coaches and organizers

⁶⁴Taped interview, Betty Jean Fisher, 21 March 1986.

⁶⁵*Report of the Board of Governors of the University of Alberta 1949 -1950*, note 19, quoted in Katharine Moore, 'A History of the Professional Contributions of Maurice Lewis Van Vliet from 1945-1978' Unpublished MA thesis, University of Alberta, 1980, p. 32.

of intramural programs, and might also be in charge of co-ordinating and officiating as many as four different sports in a school year.

Donna (Huestis) Enger did not find the public school facilities to be as adequate to her needs as did Fisher.⁶⁶ But Fisher, in spite of her impressive list of sporting achievements, attempted to keep her involvement at a purely recreational level. 'I don't get intensely involved in anything', she notes. Donna Enger perhaps had a stronger competitive drive, because she became involved in every conceivable sport from Grade One onwards. From the moment she was able to fit into skates, she was participating, and continued into university: in softball, gymnastics, track, golf, dance, keep fit, slow-pitch, tennis, broomball, badminton, tennis, modern dance, Panda basketball and Panda volleyball. In junior high school she set an Edmonton Public Schools high jump record; at the University of Alberta, she won a Major Athletic Award.

But she was frustrated in her efforts to excel at her favourite sports. When she was fifteen years old, she was chosen, on the basis of her record-breaking high jump, to attend an Olympic Training Plan Clinic in Toronto. Here she discovered that her training techniques were either outmoded or underdeveloped and that she was unable to compete at the level which she believed herself to be capable. She was also a promising gymnast, but that, too, ended with her enrollment in university in 1956. At that time, a women's competitive team, including the necessary and expensive accoutrements, had yet to be established.

Following her graduation from the University, Enger joined the Physical Education faculty and decided to do something about the lacuna in women's sport. She started the first women's gymnastics team, and describes the experience this way:

⁶⁶Taped interview, Donna K. Enger, 11 March 1986.

We struggled away....We finally got our one trip a year to the Western Intercollegiate competition. Now, a year later, Jeff Elliot arrived and formed the men's gymnastic team, and right away they were being flown to the States for competitions and it seemed money was no object. They were able to attend many competitions as opposed to our one meagre competition each year.

'The biggest problem,' she continued, 'was that there were very few women on the athletic board. When we women wanted money we were voted down.' The women's and men's athletic boards of the university had been amalgamated during the 1946-47 term. Enger's comments on the outcome for women can be applied to a similar situation in the national intercollegiate union. When the men's and women's divisions amalgamated into the Canadian Intercollegiate Athletic Union in 1978, women administrators disappeared from the intercollegiate athletic scene.

The third award winner in the semi-circle of Pandas is Patricia (McCleary) Meadus, 1958 winner of the Bakewell Trophy. Although her involvement in sport led her to the same team as Enger and Fisher, her beginnings were somewhat different.⁶⁷ Her father had been involved in administrative aspects of skiing in Camrose, Alberta, and his interest was also Pat's. Moreover, he apparently was unaware that sport wasn't good for girls; he encouraged her rather than prevented her. 'If you wanted to do something he always let you do it,' recalls Meadus. So in 1942, when she was a mere six years old, and long before specialized methods for teaching children how to ski had been developed, Meadus became the youngest child to ski down Camrose's ski hill. When she was growing up, she was the only girl competing with a dozen or more boys in the local cross-country ski club until, at age 14, she could no longer keep up. But her early involvement with skiing carried on through high school trips

⁶⁷Taped interview, Patricia Meadus, 21 March 1986.

to Marmot Basin and made her interested enough in sport to play university basketball.

She was as well-grounded in basketball as she had been in skiing. In high school, Noel McDonald Robertson, formerly of the Edmonton Grads, coached her for two years. In spite of the example of the Grads, Meadus does not feel that, at the time, women's sports were given the same emphasis as those of men:

The money, the opportunities just weren't there. It stems from way back when sports weren't a very female thing to do in a lot of respects....Women have had to find their own way in every sport they've ever done, compared to men.

Often, too, she says, there were no opportunities whatever, particularly in a smaller centre such as Camrose:

I only competed against boys....I don't remember any [other girls competing]....Certainly in our club I was always encouraged. There was really nowhere to go; I think that was the problem....And when you reach a certain age physically you can't keep up to the boys.

But she notes that western universities had, at that point at least, been spared the ignominy of 'girls' rules', which she attributes as a major reason that western and eastern intercollegiate play would have been impossible. Girl's rules were the norm east of Manitoba.

It seems unfortunate that Meadus, who had ski-jumped off a scaffold in Camrose when she was five, was unable to take full advantage of the University of Alberta's progressive approach to physical education. In spite of the difficulties, though, Meadus successfully made a career out of sports. After snaring the Bakewell Trophy, she joined the university faculty as a coach and later coached swimming and basketball in university, high school and the YMCA.

The last of the award winners from the 1957 Panda portrait is Betty Jean Harvie, who graduated in 1960 with

a BA in psychology and a Bakewell Trophy.⁶⁸ Harvie and her Panda teammates continued to play in the dilapidated gyms of the thirties and forties. But, claims Harvie, the quality of her coaches made a good game possible even in these limited surroundings. She was coached by three women, Pat Austin, Ruby Anderson and Audrey (Carson) Ackroyd, all experienced in their chosen sports and in teaching their students how to play them. Thus, when Harvie graduated and took a teaching job at Ross Shepherd Composite High School, she not only coached her girls to a provincial tournament win in 1966 but also made the Senior Women's basketball team which represented Alberta in the first Canadian Winter Games in Quebec City in 1967. Betty Jean Harvie certainly has not de-emphasized girls' sports in her career as a teacher. With her appreciation of the benefits of coaching, she realized how much sport helps young women to develop emotionally and physically. Consequently, girls' sport in her mind went far beyond the meagre considerations of neatness and order that were prevalent during these years, when educators in general were ignoring sports—in the sense of physical performance and competition—for females. If Harvie had any complaints about her experience in women's sport, it would be the lack of interest on the part of the press which was, at the time, busy 'promoting professional sports. Consequently, Harvie remembers 'begging for coverage' of major tournaments in the city papers.

Another woman to take advantage of the upgrading of physical education was Eileen (Nicol) Harle, who appears in the 1955 *Evergreen and Gold* as a member of the Badminton Club.⁶⁹ She has enjoyed a distinguished career as a teacher and coach of badminton, one which she says 'happened by chance.' Once it had happened, though, she was able to enhance it through the university's revamped physical education program.

⁶⁸Taped interview, Betty Jean Harvie, 21 April 1986.

⁶⁹Taped interview, Eileen Harle, 6 March 1986.

Harle first played badminton when she attended a clinic sponsored by the Edmonton Badminton Club, located two blocks from her home. 'I had nothing else to do that weekend,' she says cheerfully. Her instructor told her she had the most ability of anyone in the clinic, and thus her career began. 'For the first time in my life I was first in something.' When she enrolled at the University of Alberta:

[I walked] over to the old gym which was in a constant state of disrepair....It was falling down around our heads, and I started in Phys. Ed. and it was the best thing that ever happened to me.

Much of this best thing happened in that old gym, the Drill Hall, which was normally used for the university Badminton Club. That Harle's career was advanced in this fixture probably speaks well for the relative unimportance of shiny new facilities for women with the desire to play. The Drill Hall featured low rafters, a low-hanging heater and a chilly winter draft; its usefulness lay not in its convenience but in its accessibility.⁷⁰

Harle and all ten of her fellow Physical Education graduates found jobs as teachers, the only available career at that time for Bachelors of Education in Physical Education. She taught and coached in high school and at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, specializing in racquet sports, aerobics and social dance. She continued her interest in badminton, coaching the NAIT team. Badminton brought her high honours: she won the senior women's doubles in a national tournament, and more recently was named Alberta and Canadian Badminton Coach of the Year for 1986.

We now leave the yearbook editions of the fifties and turn our attention to the year 1962 and the Panda volleyball players in their business-like uniforms, 1962 winners of the Sam Landa intercollegiate trophy. The women pose in a confident group, fourteen altogether, including the

⁷⁰*The Evergreen and Gold*, Vol. 44(1944), p. 147.

coach. It is difficult to trace the whereabouts of fourteen volleyball players of 1962, but we know the histories of a few of them; from these we can learn more about developments in women's sport during their particular period.

Moving to the back row of our picture of the winners of the Sam Landa trophy, we come across the coach of the women's volleyball team, Audrey (Carson) Ackroyd. She, too, has had a long and distinguished career in women's athletics, a career which has seen the game of volleyball for women progress from 'double-volley' rules to an 'astonishing' level in international courts.⁷¹ Her contribution to women's athletics consisted mainly of coaching. She was not a 'marvelous performer' by her standards, but she did attend the Health and Recreation summer school in Red Deer, Alberta, where she took courses that prepared her for a career of teaching and coaching. She was still an undergraduate when she was appointed as a full-time instructor at the University of Alberta; she is also credited with helping to develop a recreational program for Delmonte Junior High School in Calgary which became a model for all of Alberta.

In spite of those accomplishments, Audrey Ackroyd's finest moment probably occurred when she was named the Commonwealth Games Woman of the Year. She was thus honoured for her work as chairperson of the Games' Education Committee in which she produced the first anthology of Commonwealth literature.

June Coyle, who stands beside coach Audrey Ackroyd in the yearbook portrait, enjoyed all kinds of sports, including golf, curling, swimming, every intramural sport offered at the university, plus both cross-country and downhill skiing.⁷² Above all, though, she wanted sport to be fun, and she often found that the worst culprits for taking the enjoyment out of sports were women themselves. 'Winning,' she notes, 'became more important than enjoying.'

⁷¹Taped interview, Audrey Ackroyd, 23 June 1986.

⁷²Taped interview, June Coyle, 19 April 1986.

Not that Coyle didn't enjoy winning. Sports-minded from a preschool age, she claims as her biggest thrill in sport the time when she, her two sisters and her mother won the Canadian Curling Championship. She also won the Bakewell trophy in 1961 'for participating in many sports,' which is not surprising.

Pat Jackson is the fourth woman in this particular yearbook picture whose sports career we will trace. As a performer, she was 'a hustler and a grinder' rather than a 'star'.⁷³ Hustlers and grinders tend to be more eclectic in their pursuit of activities, and Jackson has tried, at various times and with varying degrees of commitment, volleyball, basketball, softball, bowling, curling, aquatics, running, golf, skiing and field hockey. Of these, she played basketball and volleyball at the national level and golf and field hockey at the provincial level. She also coached, although she was never satisfied with herself in this field. As coach of the Canadian women's national basketball team for two years, she took the team to Cuba, an experience she recalls as being especially frustrating:

That was my first involvement in international competition....We were playing the Cuban national team and we were being trounced thoroughly in almost every game we played....I didn't have enough knowledge to even know how to make adjustments.

While she does not consider herself to have been a very effective coach, Jackson more than made up for whatever coaching limitations she may have had by excelling as an administrator. When she was appointed athletic director for the University of Saskatchewan, she gained the honour of having been the first woman in Canada to be in charge of both men's and women's university programs.

Attitudes to women in sport had shown little tendency toward dispelling the notion that sport was not really

⁷³Taped interview, Patricia Jackson, 14 July 1986.

appropriate for women. Pat Meadus notes that basketball never again came up to the standard of the Edmonton Grads, who defeated men's teams. It is difficult to say why this would be the case. Coaches like Ruby Anderson were certainly well qualified by the standard of the time, the facilities and equipment for practise existed and there was no lack of desire among the players themselves. One historian claims that it was a question of emphasis. Professional sports dominated; for school girls there were no professional pinnacles to train towards, leading to a downgrading of emphasis on girls' sports. 'Physical education classes for girls emphasized regimentation and cleanliness of uniforms above physical skill and development.'⁷⁴ While this statement certainly does not pertain to the attitudes of University of Alberta coaches in the late fifties, the official attitude, which was expressed in funding for travel as well as allocation of gym time, certainly evinces a lack of interest in allowing women to achieve their desired potential as athletes.

There is another reason for the decline of the level of skill in basketball. Both Meadus and Jackson were playing their sports during a period when, with respect to women as athletes, Canadian society was held in sway by the myth that women were not capable of mastering high-level technical skills in their games. This attitude had, of course, implications for programming which possibly prevented Jackson and her sporting peers from achieving their actual physiological potential. She remembers being limited by 'girls' rules' syndrome in high school; she recalls that, more recently:

One of the female supervisors of physical education in the City of Edmonton was of the belief that the female...wasn't capable physiologically of...being involved in the same kind of vigorous activity as the male. For example, it was quite appropriate to believe that a male could run up and down the basketball

⁷⁴Cochrane et al, p. 57.

court full-length, but [she had girls' games going cross-court].

Athletic programming in general, she feels, hampered women because of persistent ignorance with respect to the female athlete. Women, notes Jackson, 'were generally pampered. They were thought to be less capable; therefore, there were low expectations of the female athlete's performance.' today, of course, exercise physiologists are dealing with that ignorance by conducting studies of the biomechanical demands of certain sports and correlating the findings with other studies on the physiological capabilities of both men and women.

Many of the basketball and volleyball Pandas were on hand to witness yet another new phase of reorganization in the Department of Physical Education. First, the Bachelor of Education in Physical Education was replaced in 1956-57 with the Bachelor of Physical Education. The new degree:

...provided a three-year course for those wishing to go directly into recreation and allowed for more adequate concentration on teacher education through a fourth year for those planning to teach.⁷⁵

As well, it seems that Van Vliet's philosophy of physical education was gaining ground. In its 1957-58 Report, the University of Alberta's Board of Governors stated that recreation and physical education were necessary for the promotion of fitness and 'worthy use of leisure time' in Canadian citizens; it further voiced the hope that the U of A would 'lead the nation in these two fields.'⁷⁶

Needless to say, the university could not lead the nation from the Drill Hall or the Athabasca gym or the run-down ice arena; thus, plans were made to replace them.

⁷⁵Katharine Moore, 'Van Vliet', p. 34.

⁷⁶*Report of the Board of Governors of the University of Alberta 1957-1958*, p. 89, note 21, quoted in Moore, 'Van Vliet', p. 34.

The new building was opened on its present site in 1960, the year that also saw the inauguration of the graduate program (master's level) in physical education. A scant two years later, a degree program in Recreation Leadership (later, Recreation Administration) was approved and finally, for the climax of Van Vliet's long years of effort, Physical Education became a faculty with Van Vliet its first Dean, on April 1, 1964. It was the first such faculty in the Commonwealth and another reflection of Van Vliet's philosophy:

While other universities...seemed to be implying that the chief function of physical education is to develop 'teachers' ...the developments at the U of A...seem to imply that physical education, in itself, is worthy of study and therefore the function of the faculty is not primarily to develop 'teachers' within the physical education program.⁷⁷

During this decade, the federal government was looking for a policy with respect to physical education, if not an actual philosophy. In spite of the publication of the *5BX* and *10BX* physical fitness programs, which seemed to indicate a concern for fitness, in 1959 the National Physical Fitness Act was repealed. Nobody construed this as an indication that Canadians were no longer flabby, however, and the Canadian Sports Advisory Council continually lobbied Ottawa for a replacement. The Prime Minister of the moment, John Diefenbaker, professed his own commitment to amateur sport in the interests of nationalism:

In the field of sports today there are tremendous dividends in national pride from some degree of success in athletics. The uncommitted countries of the world are now using these athletic contests as measurements of the evidence of the strength and power of the nations participating.⁷⁸

⁷⁷Cosentino and Howell, p. 62.

⁷⁸*Canada. Parliament. House of Commons Debates: 1960-1961* Vol. I (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1961), p. 39, quoted in Gear, p. 22.

The new Act, Bill C-131, was introduced in 1961, and it reflected Diefenbaker's nationalist tenor. Gone was the preoccupation with 'fitness' per se. In its place was a new interest in amateur sport. Bill C-131, as one sports historian remarks, 'was...the opening of the door for government involvement in sport for the purpose of improving national prestige.'⁷⁹ He also notes that government concern for fitness and sport was always a response to a more pressing social need. During the Depression, fitness was invoked as a means of occupying the idle unemployed; in World War II, its purpose was to get men into shape for the army. And during the Cold War of the fifties, amateur sport was a source of national pride and therefore an antidote to communism.⁸⁰ Whatever the rationale, there can be no doubt that the government's reawakened interest in fitness and sport would redound to the benefit of the athletic community, both male and female. In the future there would be money, and a few determined sportswomen were ready to fight for it. Also, there would be a campaign to get men and women into physical action. For the men, the campaign was just another, albeit more lucrative, form of encouragement from a society that loved athletic men. For the women, it would mark a push towards emancipation from the social attitudes that did not seem to have changed much since someone invented the Victorian ideal of a woman. Women and sport were going to be compatible. And in the Faculty of Physical Education at the University of Alberta, and in other universities as well, new sciences were emerging that would acknowledge on charts, graphs and computer print-outs the enormous physiological potential of the female athlete. The next few years were going to be an exciting time for women in sport.

Of course, women athletes themselves helped make these changes possible through their determination to make a commitment to sport despite the obstacles of so-

⁷⁹Gear, p. 23.

⁸⁰*ibid*, p. 25.

cial attitude, lack of funding and discriminatory allocation of facilities. Women who became athletes under these conditions would have to have an implacable desire to do so. Commenting in *Sports Illustrated*, an American track and field coach noted that 'desire' separated the men from the women in one important respect:

Coaches of men's teams often single out an individual athlete and say his most valuable characteristic is his desire. You seldom hear girls' coaches make this sort of comment. The reason, I think, is that *any* girl or woman who is very much involved in athletics tends to have an extraordinary amount of desire....The way things are in this country, any girl who perseveres in sport has to be not only an exceptional athlete but an exceptional human being.⁸¹

⁸¹Gilbert and Williamson, 'Sport', p. 98.

1942



Women's Archery Team

(left to right): Betty Tregale, Doris Danner, Arlene Pinch, Marjorie Lough, Betty Montgomery, Roma Ballhorn, Marjorie Thompson, May Miller, Mary Chandler, Blanche Wallace

(front row): Calvin Fletcher, Watson MacCrostie

1938



Ladies' Basketball, Varsity vs. Saskatchewan

1918



Varsity Basketball Team

1963



Fencing Club

Juliet (Sutton) McMaster is standing, second from right.
(*Evergreen and Gold*, 1963, p. 39)

1930-31



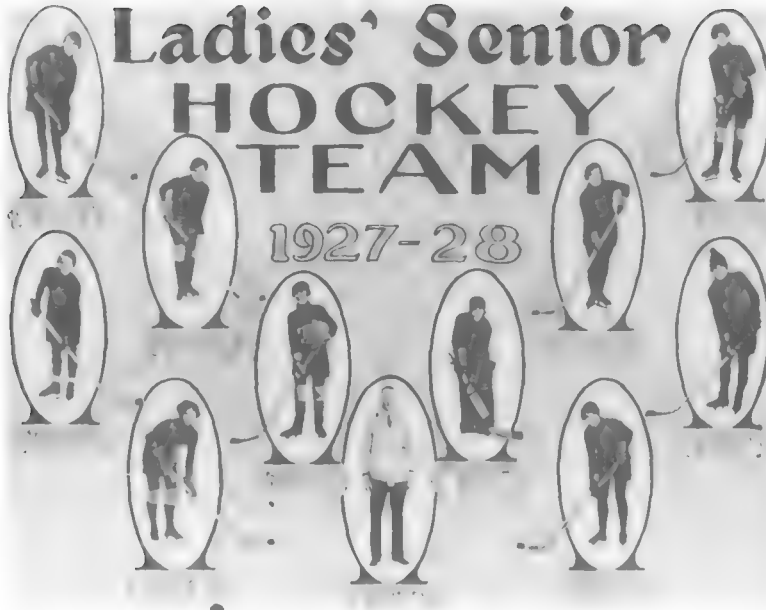
University of Alberta basketball team
(*Evergreen and Gold*, 1931)

1940



Jean Robertson, basketball centre

1927-28



Ladies' Senior Hockey Team
(*Evergreen and Gold*, 1927-28, p. 57)

1928



Hockey Costume, Ladies' Hockey Team, U of A
(*Gateway*, Feb. 24, 1928, p. 4)



1936

Badminton Costumes
(*Evergreen and Gold*,
1936, p. 237)



1936

Tennis Costumes
(*Evergreen and Gold*,
1936, p. 235)

1962



Women's Volleyball

Back row (left to right): Audrey (Carson) Ackroyd (coach), June Coyle, Jo Gazelny, Margo Niewchas, Marny Huckvale, Bette Stacey, Pat Jackson, Eunice Mattson

Front row (left to right): Ida Thompson, Andrea Borys, Joan Smith, Brenda Matas, Barbara Waywitka, Irma Feldmeyer
(*Evergreen and Gold*, 1962, p. 209)

1928-29

Women's Track Team

Ethel (Barnett) Cuts,
Gladys (Fry) Douglas,
Doris Calhoun,
Gwen Roxburgh,
H.J. Landon (coach)



1927-28



Ladies' Track Team, Inter-Varsity Champions

(left to right): D. McLeod, R. Fry, D. Hill, Vera (Palmer) Crockford,
Glady (Fry) Douglas, Ethel (Barnett) Cuts, F. Macmillan
(*Evergreen and Gold*, 1927-28, p. 59)

1962-64

Patricia Austin



1964



Gwen Smith coaching a beginners class

*Revolutionary
Accomplishments
Before the Revolution*

Perhaps the least that can be said for the accomplishments of the University of Alberta's women athletes is that they represent extraordinary degrees of perseverance. So many of these women had no precedents to inspire them; they were often the first to venture into some sporting unknown. There are a few women who, almost single-handedly, raised the qualities of perseverance and adventurousness to a new level. Their accomplishments may seem commonplace by today's reckoning; we are becoming more and more accustomed to hearing about out of the ordinary athletic feats by women. There are female race-car drivers and jockeys, women and girls trying out for places on men's teams, women defeating men in individual sports. But just as Billie Jean King had to beat Bobbie Riggs so that other female tennis players could feel themselves equal to males, other, less well-known women had to set precedents for others to follow. And the paucity of female role models throughout the sports world in the fifties and early sixties meant that there were any number of precedents that needed setting. In western Canada, geographical isolation also meant that American or eastern Canadian female stars were more remote from western women's experience, leaving an even larger void to be filled.

Still, the fifties and early sixties saw the emergence of women athletes who, whether those following them were aware of it or not, laid the foundation for the future, when, through the women's movement, traditional restraints against sporting women began to dissolve. One of these women was Pat Austin, first female Physical Education graduate from the University of Toronto. Another was Kathleen Leitch, the first person to swim Lake Winnipeg. Juliet McMaster gained international recognition in fencing, while Elsie McFarland was one of the first women to hold a senior administrative position in the Government of Alberta. Sandy O'Brien was on the first Canadian Olympic gymnastics team in 1968; Gwen Smith coached four of her children on their way to several of the Games as swimming stars. Finally, the victories of Gail Ross in show jumping were the first step in bringing Western Canada and its riders to the position they enjoy today at centre stage in world jumping competition.

Born in 1922, Patricia Austin began a long and distinguished career as a coach and physical educator by being the first woman to graduate from the University of Toronto with a Bachelor of Physical Education. M.L. Van Vliet was impressed enough with her potential to hire her for his department in 1947, where she remained until her death in 1978. The open and innovative atmosphere at the University of Alberta was exactly right for a person of Austin's energy and imagination, and she used both as constructive vehicles for developing undergraduate and graduate programs in physical education. Her evenings and weekends were spent as a Pandas coach; other waking hours were filled with administrative work through her positions on the University Athletic Board, and as organizer of the Women's Division of the Western Canadian intercollegiate Athletic Association.

While she was improving physical education programs and Panda performances, she was conscientious about improving herself. She took an MA in Physical Education in 1949 and a doctorate from Michigan State Univer-

sity in 1965. But these pressing academic duties didn't stop Austin from enjoying a life as a sportswoman, and along that road she picked up several honours as a golfer, including a trophy for the Canadian Ladies Golf Association in 1973, which was a Senior Championship.

Although students entering the Faculty of Physical Education at the U of A have Austin to thank for the diversity of many of their programs, she is perhaps best known for her work on behalf of mentally handicapped children. Among other accomplishments, she helped to develop the Alberta Special Games for the Mentally Retarded and founded PREP, the Pre-School Play Program for mentally handicapped children at the University of Alberta. Her interest in these children led her to undertake much research in human motor development, basing her own programs on the contention that improving motor skills was fundamental to increasing learning capacity in mentally handicapped children.

Sadly, Pat Austin's career—and life—were cut short. In 1978, she became ill and took a leave of absence from the U of A, thus ending a 31-year span as a physical educator. She died in Toronto in December of 1978, but her memory remains an inspiration to women wanting to be coaches, players, academics—or innovators.

Not all women associated with the university gained their acclaim through university sports. One such woman, Kathleen (McIntosh) Leitch, wife of U of A professor Dr. Lorne Leitch, made her name in sport in 1955 in the cold waters of Lake Winnipeg. She was the first person, man or woman, to swim the breadth of the lake successfully; she accomplished this feat on August 19, 1955, just before her twenty-first birthday.⁸²

As a child Leitch had always been interested in sport, learning to swim at age five. Her father, an instructor in Royal Lifesaving, provided much of the impetus behind

⁸²Taped interview, Kathleen Leitch, 27 June 1985.

her swimming career, involving her in sprint swimming and lifesaving in a St. Boniface, Manitoba, swim club. She took on distance swimming at age 18, about a year before Marilyn Bell completed her successful swim of Lake Ontario. Leitch swam Claw Lake in Manitoba, a distance of about ten miles, with her father accompanying her in his canoe. Of her father, Leitch says:

He was terrific. He was one of these people who was never satisfied with what you did....If you said that you had done five miles he would say...that you could do more.

The ten miles was easy, so Leitch's father thought Kathleen should be able to swim the 18 miles across Lake Winnipeg the following year.

According to Leitch, they made their first attempt 'in a Mickey Mouse way,' paying no attention to weather reports or other warnings. The young marathon swimmer came within two miles of finishing when she was stopped by a storm. 'I thought it was kind of fun,' says Leitch. 'It was dark, and big waves were throwing me around.' Disappointed in her failed attempt, Leitch prepared to try again. In the meantime, records were searched to see if she really was attempting a 'first.' She was, and the local media got into the act, a radio station putting up a thousand dollars, while other media challenged anyone and everyone to wade into the water with Kathleen Leitch.

The *Winnipeg Tribune* offered to sponsor her in exchange for an exclusive feature. Leitch was one of five or six to make the attempt; the others were all men. She started out on Friday morning of August 19, 1955, and for sixteen hours of steady swimming, bolstered by chocolate bars which she was allowed to take from the end of the paddle without touching it, she listened to her father's recounting of the Winnipeg radio stations' enthusiastic coverage, of planes watching her from overhead, of the thousand people waiting on the far shore. 'Then, the last two miles I was really bone tired, but Dad said the last ten feet I started to

sprint. I knew I was there, and I just started to sprint, and people were wading into the water....Then Dad bundled me up in a blanket. We went up the beach to a friend's cottage and I slept for about twelve hours. I was totally famous for about a month and then I was a has-been.'

Nobody else was successful on that day, although the swim has been accomplished several times since 1955. But Kathleen Leitch was first, and for a few days at least a woman's athletic feat was as important in the Winnipeg papers as pro hockey and football.

Juliet (Sutton) McMaster was another innovator in the history of women's sport at the University of Alberta, invading the ranks of traditionally male competition in the relatively unusual sport of fencing.⁸³ Currently a U of A English professor, McMaster grew up in Nairobi, and McMaster took up the foil. Needless to say, Nairobi didn't have much to offer an aspiring fencer; thus, it was not until McMaster became a student at Oxford University that the fencing world opened to her. She became an Oxford Blue, continuing fencing as a serious sport when she enrolled at the U of A for graduate studies in English.

Fencing had its limitations for a women in western Canada. Geographical distance plus an absence of programs for young people make competing at a high level quite difficult, and McMaster was also faced with the twin responsibilities of raising a family and pursuing a career. She remembers when she was finally forced to give up elite-level competition in order to raise her two children. She was competing in the national finals and had to catch an early plane home to be with her three-month old daughter. Delays in the tournament kept her late, and when she faced the last two opponents between herself and the gold medal:

...my concentration went all to hell. I knew I was missing the plane and I fenced the last bout with no

⁸³Taped interview, Juliet McMaster, 9 February 1985.

concentration at all and had to be satisfied with the silver medal....They rushed me to the airport; they drove like maniacs....As we approached the airport we saw a plane taking off into the air and it was my plane.

Her equipment still dangling off her, she telephoned her husband and wept.

At her job and in the course of her tenure as president of the University of Alberta fencing club, McMaster encountered resistance to her athletic competence. 'To be competent, with some people at least, marked you off as one of those mannish women,' and she found that feigning helplessness often would get her business satisfactorily concluded more quickly than a straight-forward, business-like approach. She feels that attitude has definitely changed today:

I used to see, among the beginning women fencers in particular, a 'why are you expecting me to do this properly' attitude....They felt it was fashionable to be helpless in those days.

Now, says McMaster, 'women are expected to be physically competent.' But she did not remain in competition long enough to see two especially repressive rules changed for women's fencing. The first involves the use of weapons, of which there are three: the foil, the epee and the sabre. Of these, women could use only the foil in competition. The second rule involves the number of 'hits' in each match; women were allowed four to the men's five. McMaster made her own attempt to circumvent the first rule. 'I remember once putting on a fake mustache and coming in as a stranger. 'Jules'. But somebody gave me away. They said 'oh, come on Juliet, what do you think you're doing?'" Unsuccessful as she was on that particular day, she was later able to compete in men's epee at an unrecognized competition in Edmonton, where she finished second.

Juliet McMaster sees fencing as 'the engagement of two minds, like a pair of chess players;' it is, for her, a

thinker's sport. But she also enjoyed being physically competent and perhaps this is why the sport of fencing, demanding much from both body and mind, was so attractive to her, apart from the romanticism of swords. Whatever the reason, she became so adept at her favourite sport that in 1965 she won the Western Canadian finals, the Gads Trophy for the best effort by a fencer at the University of Alberta, a national silver medal and a berth on the national team. For this impressive roster of accomplishments she was voted Alberta's Woman Athlete of the Year for 1965.

A common tenet of most women in sport is that, apart from the critical element of desire, women also need role models to give them a vision of what they are capable of and how they can achieve it. The need for female role models is not, of course, peculiar to athletes; one historian notes that the paucity of women in the professions made it difficult for girls in the fifties to see themselves as doctors, dentists or lawyers. Female role models in sport consist of more than just athletes. One of the most important positions a woman can hold in the sports world is that of administrator, since it gives her a voice in how sports are conducted and who is to receive funding. A pioneer administrator, and thus an important role model for those following her, is Elsie McFarland.

Although she was involved in sports from an early age, 'swimming in the old swimming hole' on her farm home near Pincher Creek, and playing softball and fast-ball, McFarland was not primarily interested in competition.⁸⁴ Administrative aspects took over almost immediately after she had graduated from the university and the track team. She attended Red Deer's recreational leadership summer school, took an MPE in Wisconsin and a PhD at the University of Illinois. Between degrees, she was busy helping to organize recreational programs and to develop facilities for the provincial government,

⁸⁴Taped interview, Elsie McFarland, 24 July 1986.

holding successive positions in the Youth, Culture, and Youth and Recreation Departments. She was one of the first women to hold a senior position in one of these departments, and she remembers the discrimination against women which was rife during that period. 'There were strange little things you had to accept,' she recalls. 'You couldn't have a job because it should go to a man with a family. I guess it started in university. I wanted to take science and math because those were the things I was good at. Dr. M.E. Lazerte, who was my adviser, said, 'oh, women take history and English. Math is for the men.' I was too shy to do anything about it.'

McFarland is well aware of her position as professional role model in sport. 'Women should have the opportunity to see other women, and I provided them with that.' Alberta's women have seen Elsie McFarland receive a Canada Parks and Recreation Award, a Provincial Government award and a Queen Elizabeth medal for her excellent performance as an administrator.

We have now seen University of Alberta women who, because of their accomplishments in a variety of areas, became inspirations for the women of the future. When the women's movement was revived in the late sixties, sporting women would not lack for models to emulate. Often enough, though, when people look for role models, it is not to the relatively obscure areas of administration or to daredevilish feats like swimming a lake. It is to models with a more conventional appeal and a higher profile. It is to the Olympic performers that a young sportswoman looks and says, 'I want to be like her.' University of Alberta women are among Canadians who have tasted Olympic grandeur. Of these, two stand out for both their accomplishments and their early appearance—by Western Canadian standards—on the Olympic scene. They are Sandy (Hartley) O'Brien and Gwen Smith.

Long before the Soviets popularized women's gymnastics with their adolescent superstars, Sandy

O'Brien was experimenting with a mat and trampoline in her North Vancouver junior high school, or practising at home on a steel pipe that was too fat, too cold and too slippery.⁸⁵ She was making use of her sense of balance and aesthetics which had been honed by childhood ballet and tapdancing lessons.

O'Brien's perseverance and willingness were not the only instruments that would turn the after-school practises into a life-long involvement. She remembers a long chain of support, from her parents to the physical education teachers who gave her permission to practise after school, to those who volunteered to supervise her (for safety reasons) and who encouraged her to try out for the high school team while she was still in Junior High School. 'I don't know what the phys ed teachers saw in me,' says O'Brien. 'Whether they saw talent or whether they saw a super-motivated kid and thought they'd let her work it out of her system.'

The coach of the high school club insisted she have a try-out, where she was introduced for the first time to a balance beam and vaulting horse. 'They could see from what I could do, and what I was able to attempt, that I was nutty enough to become a gymnast.' Thus, O'Brien entered 'a very good' senior high school program at the age of fourteen and began preparations for her first championship event, where she finished twelfth of thirteen.

With but a few months training, she entered the national championships in 1965 as a junior where she placed sixth. In the years that followed, she improved that placing considerably, winning once and finishing no worse than third in five attempts, after which she retired. The culmination of this skein of successes and exposure to international competition was her being chosen to represent Canada at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. Being a novice group, and thus unknown to judges, the Canadian

⁸⁵Taped interview, Sandra O'Brien, 13 February 1986.

gymnasts had to work hard for their scores, but they managed to finish eleventh, which is about where Canadian gymnastics teams have finished in Olympic competition since that time.

O'Brien's parents had different qualities as instigators of their daughter's success. Her mother, a dancing teacher, knew the technical aspects of the sport, was a great organizer and was willing to sacrifice her time to get O'Brien to Seattle clinics and other training sessions. Her father was psychologically supportive. 'He had the attitude that it was okay to mess up once in awhile as long as you tried.' This was an approach O'Brien took with her when she began her career as a coach at the University of Alberta.

Thanks to the Soviet superstars, women's gymnastics today is a high profile Olympic sport, and much time and technical expertise is expended in choosing little girls to begin training early enough that they might reach their peaks at thirteen to fifteen years of age. O'Brien began at the age of fourteen, though, and there were no rival coaches vying to recruit her. By contrast, she undertook much of her twenty hours a week training schedule alone, often competing with the University of British Columbia men's basketball team for gym space. In the end, the absence of a coach was instrumental in her decision to retire. She was at her second international competition in as many weeks, was somewhat worried about being able to make the time commitment to graduate studies, and felt that those drawbacks, along with having no coach, were making her reluctant to continue. 'It was getting very difficult to keep my standard high,' she confesses.

Still, O'Brien remembers her own involvement in international competition as a magical time, and even though she did not win a medal, she was a national team member from 1967 to 1971. And gymnastics gave her a future as a coach at the University of Alberta. Here, O'Brien's talent and experience combined to raise the Panda gymnasts' performance level to an unprecedented

high. During her first term at the university, in 1971-72, the Pandas won the national championships.⁸⁶ In following years O'Brien extended her coaching duties to include the positions of head gymnastics coach of Canada's World Student Games in 1973 and Assistant Coach of Canada's 1972 Olympics gymnastics team. In 1979, she had the Panda gymnasts in high gear; they dominated the national intercollegiate tournament, in spite of Ontario's and Quebec's superior facilities. O'Brien, who believes that a gymnast has a ten-year outside limit to her endurance, explained the win thus: 'Their young gymnasts enter university with ten years of competition under their belts and they're all burned out. [Ours] haven't had as much....They are hungry for more and able to do more.'⁸⁷

One woman whose career was long enough for her to witness many changes in the sporting scene is Gwen Smith, wife of the late Dr. W. Donald Smith, himself one of the pioneers of Van Vliet's physical education department, and mother and coach of the 'swimming Smiths', their eight talented children. Gwen Smith has seen the evolution of swimming as a sport, the emergence of paid, professional coaches to replace the harried volunteers, the inculcation of sportscience into swimming programs, and the increased emphasis on early specialization in a single sport for young athletes.

Gwen (Lewis) Smith was born in Toronto in 1925.⁸⁸ She swam competitively at the University of Toronto where she excelled in the freestyle. At that time there was no distance swimming for women; there were still a good ten years to elapse before Marilyn Bell and Kathleen Leitch would make that aspect of swimming a woman's speciality. Smith also met and married her husband in Toronto and

⁸⁶*Gateway* staff, 'Pandas Typify Trend in Gymnastics', *The Gateway*, 10 January 1973, p. 10.

⁸⁷*Gateway* staff, 'O'Brien's Midas Touch', *The Gateway*, 9 March 1979, p. 9.

⁸⁸Taped interview, Gwen Smith, 21 October 1985.

moved west with him when he joined the physical education staff at the University of Alberta in 1948.

The Smiths bought a big house and filled it with children, some of their names now well known: Graham, George, Susan, Lewis, Sandra, Alison, Scott and Becky. They began their own competitive swimming careers almost by accident. Their parents had searched high and low for a good summer cottage; finding none, Gwen Smith decided to send them to the Queen Elizabeth outdoor pool across the road from the Smith home. 'That pool became the focus for the children from the May 24th weekend to the Labour Day weekend. They all learned to swim before Grade One.'

Their swims were often interrupted by practises held for competitive swimmers, but rather than go home the Smith children watched the speed swimmers and got to like the idea of swimming fast. There were no paid coaches until the seventies; consequently their mother made use of her own experience and expertise as a swimmer to coach her children. 'I really enjoy the little ones,' she confesses, 'because you can see them progressing so rapidly.' thus, Gwen took care of the basics and Don did the 'fine tuning.'

In the early sixties, when the Smiths were first swimming, the sport was a seasonal one, there being few indoor pools to justify the establishment of a uniform winter program. In 1965, though, indoor winter training commenced with the opening of several indoor pools in the province. 'This changed the whole face of swimming in Alberta,' Smith points out. Swimming had become a winter sport rather than a summer one. With winter training, volunteer coaches were taxed to the limit: two hours morning and evening, with the weekend 'jammed with swim meets. You really never had any time to yourself.'

As a coach, Gwen Smith could pinpoint future competitive swimmers at the age of ten or eleven years, at which point she would ask them whether they were interested in elite-level swimming. 'I didn't need an answer that year, but they had to start thinking about it, because

the demands on the time of an elite-level competitor were such that they had to give up everything except school, eat, sleep and swim.' The parents had to sacrifice, too, driving driving, waiting, billeting—and always in a hurry. Once the Smith children were involved in competitive swimming, their entire lives were subsumed by it. And all eight of them were involved.

The first of their great challenges occurred in 1969 when Alison, Sandy, Susan and Becky competed together in a relay at the National Championships in Pointe Claire, Quebec. 'They set a national senior women's record. Smith, Smith, Smith, and Smith. It's never happened before and probably will never happen again.' Becky was eleven years old at the time. Under pressure to keep the lead her two sisters had established, she set a personal best that she never managed to beat. This feat gave her the confidence to become one of eight Canadian women to win medals in more than one Olympics.

Four of the swimming Smiths made it to the Olympics: George, Susan, Graham and Becky. The first of the Smiths was born in 1948, the last in 1961. Consequently, their collective experiences as competitive swimmers and Olympians spanned several years of developments in sport and as their ever-present coach, Gwen Smith has been impressed by the changes which have taken place during their careers. In swimming, the butterfly stroke evolved from the freestyle, and sportscience has been 'a marvelous influence' on the development of athletes. Sportscientists 'coach the coaches and recommend diet and training regimes for the athletes. They can tell if a swimmer is performing or just goofing off,' says Smith. Sportscience has even affected the construction of pools; one with a constant depth has been found to be faster than one with deep and shallow ends.

The second major development the Smiths have seen is that of early specialization of young athletes. When the oldest Smith children were competing, there was not much pressure on them to confine themselves to swimming, and

they could still ski or play ball. But the youngest, Graham and Becky, 'faced a whole new ball game.' Becky's total involvement in competitive swimming meant that she had no lasting friendships in high school; thus, the younger Smiths are reluctant to see their own children become competitive swimmers.

Finally, government funding is much more lavish than it used to be. The oldest of the eight Smiths received no funding at all for competition. In the 1968 Olympics, parents still had to foot one-third of the enormous bills, but by 1978, Sport Canada began providing funds for Olympic competitors. 'When you're good enough, Sport Canada just takes over,' notes Gwen Smith.

One of Gwen Smith's finest personal achievements was to help put Alberta on the international sporting map. It was the contribution of individuals, as much as the presence of excellent facilities and a positive atmosphere, which has helped a one-time sporting backwater to become a worthy host of Commonwealth, Universiade and Olympic Games. Alberta, like some of its sporting heroines, now enjoys a high sports profile. Other women in other sports also helped to entrench Alberta's name in the vocabulary of sports enthusiasts. One of these women attended the University of Alberta; her name is Gail Ross and her sport is show jumping.

For years, the red-coated riders piloting their magnificent and expensive charges over absurdly high obstacles were the stuff of 'society' sections of newspapers. Now, the horses are called sport horses, their riders are recognized as athletes and, partly because of the pioneering successes of Gail Ross, Alberta is well known as a centre for horse sport in North America.

Horses, unlike skis or basketballs, cannot be stored in the equipment room in the off-season, or even put out to pasture. Like human athletes, they have to continue their training to keep their competitive condition. In warmer climates, this is not a major problem; in Western Canada, training the show jumper becomes a capital-

intensive venture from the beginning. If one wants to compete with Californians, one needs an indoor riding arena for winter riding.

When Gail Ross began riding in 1948, indoor arenas didn't exist in Alberta.⁸⁹ the Ross family were all interested in riding, so Gail's father built an arch-rib structure on the family property. This building kept Gail going, but there were no instructors in Western Canada of a calibre to make her competitive outside of Alberta. 'Western Canada was pretty laid back as far as training was concerned,' says Ross. Money was no object, so Ross and her parents scoured North America in search of such an instructor. She rode in Eastern Canada, in Chicago, and in California, finally making her way to England to study under Richard Stilwell. 'He turned out to be the biggest input into my riding style and thoughts.' From him she learned 'the fundamentals', techniques which today are standard in virtually all of Alberta's indoor arenas where jumping instruction can be had, but which were unheard of in Alberta when Ross needed them.

The Ross family paid for all of this themselves. They also paid Gail's way to the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto in 1961 and 1967, where she won the European jumper championships, and they met the expenses that Gail incurred on the way to her two North American Championships in 1963 and 1965. These victories were firsts for a Western Canadian, and often Ross's unique position was visible in humorous ways. 'Our horses were very hairy,' she notes, referring to the long winter coats which made her animals stand out rather painfully next to the sleek beasts of warmer climates and more experienced competitors. 'We didn't know to clip in those days.' Once, at age fourteen, she was entered in a jumper sweepstake at the Cow Palace in San Francisco on one of her hairy horses. 'Gong into the third go-round, we were leading and lo and behold I forgot the course. I carried that with me for a long time.'

⁸⁹Taped interview, Gail Ross, 19 September 1986.

She carried her victories with her, too, her example certainly an inspiration to any other Alberta woman who would like to ride and would be willing to make the necessary sacrifices of time, money and other pursuits to do so. And Alberta women riders today show no fear of international competition. Recently, for example, Gail Greenough of Edmonton became the first woman and the first Canadian to win the World Cup of show jumping, held in Aachen, West Germany in July of 1986. Gail Ross looks at that victory and jokingly remarks that she herself came on the scene 'twenty years too soon.' Yet, one wonders whether, without her precedent, Albertans' participation in world equestrian events would not be another twenty years down the road.

These women—Pat Austin, Kathleen Leitch, Juliet McMaster, Elsie McFarland, Sandy O'Brien, Gwen Smith and Gail Ross—are special. Their major accomplishments came before women were accepted as legitimate competitors in most sports, before government funding relieved at least one of the burdens of heavy commitment to competition, and before most women dared do 'men's work' in administrative offices. Their efforts preceded the revival of the women's movement, sometimes by many years, but in one respect they are part of that movement. However isolated their accomplishments may have been, they became models for a better future for women in sport.

*A Female Athletic
Revolution at the
University of Alberta*

The mid- to late-sixties brought the rebirth of the women's movement, dormant since suffrage, and what is now termed 'the female athletic revolution.' There are, of course, strong connections between the two phenomena. The women's movement was, in part, a product of the continued influx of women into the labour force during the fifties and sixties. In spite of the 'back to the home movement', twice as many women were at work in 1960 as in 1940 and 40 per cent of all women over sixteen years held a job; their enlarged economic roles helped to blur traditional distinctions between what was considered to be 'masculine' or 'feminine.'⁹⁰ Modern feminism also stemmed from the civil rights movement in the United States; hence its emphasis on the pursuit of legal rights through the judiciary. Female athletes benefitted greatly from these aspects of the women's movement. Women found their way into traditionally 'masculine' sports and, if barred from participating, fought the discrimination through the courts.

At the University of Alberta, more and more women competed, less burdened by stigma, than ever before. Many were in the thick of agitation for improved funding

⁹⁰Chafe, p. 218.

and expanded opportunities for sporting women; others were taking advantage of the brighter climate to play their sports with a greater degree of commitment and skill. The result was greater achievement for University of Alberta sportswomen and increased awareness among them that participation was as important and enjoyable for women as for men. Female participation in sport increased at all levels. Panda try-outs became fiercely competitive, while intramurals for women included 16 different sports by 1972.⁹¹ Some of these were billiards, bowling, curling, archery, tennis and field hockey, plus co-recreational volleyball, badminton, racquetball, basketball, water polo and swimming. Out of this combination of competitiveness and variety came star performers, now no more strangers to the U of A than to the rest of Canada. Their achievements have helped to enhance the weak profile of women's sport; the higher profile engenders, in turn, more enlightened attitudes to women's athletic potential. And the women's movement is not the only phenomenon of the late twentieth century to have a far-reaching influence on women's sport. There is, as well, increasing specialization in fields of academic study coupled with vastly improved understanding of the function of the human body at play, expressed as biomechanics, sportscience, and sportsmedicine.

University of Alberta women have distinguished themselves in all of these facets of women's sport. Among the many women who have struggled through periods of frustration in order to bring about an improved sporting scene for women is Andrea Borys, educator, coach and administrator. Female athletes who starred in the courts and then used their success and knowledge to bring about improvements for others include Beverly (Richard) Spencer, Trix (Kannekans) Baker, Katharine Moore and Brenda (Whitley) Farr. And there is one woman whose phenomenal athletic abilities have forced cynics to acknowledge and

⁹¹*Gateway* staff, 'be a sport', 12 September 1972, p. 7.

admire women's athletic potential: Susan Nattrass, Olympic trapshooting star. Women who turned from athletics to academia, and whose research is having its effects on our understanding of the role of sport in our lives are Ann Hall, Debra Shogan and Wendy Bedingfield. All of these women and their achievements are products of the women's movement; all are part of it as well.

Andrea Borys is currently a professor in the University of Alberta's Faculty of Education. Prior to achieving that position, however, she had already distinguished herself by playing volleyball in the Canadian championships for four years in a row with the Calgary 'Cals', by making the national team for the 1967 Pan American Games, by spearheading the drive to develop a university women's volleyball team of a calibre good enough for the world student games in Turin, Italy, by being one of only two women coaches at those games, by taking national women's teams to Cuba and Brazil, and by serving stints as coach, administrator, fundraiser, and advocate of women's sport.

To prepare for the 1967 Pan American Games, Borys and her teammates practised five hours a day at the team's training camp in Winnipeg.⁹² This degree of dedication was not enough for the first Canadian women's Pan American volleyball team to win any games; nevertheless, the women must have provided their successors with a positive influence. Since 1967, the Canadian women's team has ranked in the top ten internationally, and it is now routine for Canada's female volleyball stars to play at the Pan American Games, various world championships and the Olympics. The 1967 Pan American games experience must also have been a positive one for Borys herself, because she continued in international volleyball competition. In 1970 she coached the University of Calgary team when it went to Turin, Italy, for the World Student Games. That experience, recalls Borys, was 'dreadful.' Her university-calibre team was pitted against university-aged women

⁹²Taped interview, Andrea Borys, 24 May 1986.

who were also on their countries' national and Olympic squads. Inevitably, Borys's team lost every game. The worst of it, though, was that:

The only women coaches at the competition were the woman who coached the women's gymnastics team and myself. I had absolutely no one to talk to to share this experience....Finally Mrs. Van Vliet and I and the girls went to the coast for a couple of days just to get away.

Still, that adventure was another first. 'Since then,' Borys points out, 'women have competed at the world student games in volleyball on a regular basis.'

Borys's coaching career lasted five more years, after which she tired of the enormous commitment exacted by elite level competition. Before leaving the gym floor completely, she accepted a position as manager of the women's national basketball team, which took her first to training camp in Courtenay, B.C., and then to Brazil. Again, it was a first for Canadian women athletes, and they may not have been quite prepared for what greeted them:

The Soviet Union had girls whose heights ranged from six-foot two to seven-foot one.Our tallest girl was six-two....Needless to say the Soviet Union beat us quite handily....We then watched the finals in Sao Paulo....They were played in a coliseum that was jammed to the rafters...and the crowd was excited and the basketball was outstanding.

In 1975, Andrea Borys was able to pursue her interest in teacher education with an appointment at the University of Alberta. She feels that her experience as an international-calibre coach and manager helped to prepare her for administrative work; it has certainly given her an excellent capacity for the critical evaluation of women's athletics. In all of these aspects, she has helped to bring about improvements for sporting women at the University of Alberta.

Beverly Spencer was another versatile performer whose desire and ability enabled her to excel at her cho-

sen sport. She was a graduate of the Bachelor of Physical Education program at the University of Alberta, where she played on Panda basketball and volleyball teams, and, following her graduation, she continued her athletic pursuits on the badminton courts.

Born in Edmonton, Spencer grew up in a family that enjoyed racquet and other sports enough to want to take advantage of the professional coaching available at Edmonton's Royal Glenora Club.⁹³ Spencer's father coached her, too, as well as organizing tennis tournaments in the province. The combination, along with help from coaches in secondary school, gave Spencer a good start towards becoming a top-notch tennis and badminton player, but in the late fifties and early sixties, it still did not amount to a science-based training program. It was enough, though, to establish in Spencer a permanent enjoyment of sport. During her Bachelor of Physical Education program (1967-69) at the University of Alberta, she played for five years on several teams, including Panda basketball and volleyball, and won the Bakewell trophy in her second year.

Opportunities for female athletes at this time had shown some definite improvement from the parsimonious fifties. Spencer recalls trips to Vancouver, Victoria, Calgary, Winnipeg, Saskatoon and Brandon:

We used to travel by train....In those days...there used to be five or six universities gathered together in one place....We'd have skit nights where each team had to produce a skit....Those are times that I remember....

Spencer enjoyed the games, but in hindsight, she says, the wins and losses were unimportant; her memories are of people and of lessons learned from her experience.

Panda basketball was not Spencer's only forte, of course. Her excellent early training in badminton and tennis enabled her to attain a high level of proficiency in her

⁹³Taped interview, Beverly Spencer, 3 March 1986.

university years. In the flush sixties, tennis and badminton teams flourished on campus, and Spencer was a member. She and her badminton teammate represented the University of Alberta at the 1967 Canada Student Games, where they took the doubles competition. For that victory, and for her contribution to the Pandas, Spencer was one of the first six inductees to the University of Alberta's Sports 'Wall of Fame'. Spencer received Physical Education and Education degrees and became a teacher at Ross Shepherd Composite High School. Like Eileen Harle, she was joined in that profession by '95%' of her fellow Physical Education graduates. Different routes—professional coaching, administration, research—were not yet available.

Spencer has been a teacher for 16 years now. During that time, she has coached a variety of high school sports. Her commitment to physical education is based on her perception of what that education entails. She feels that 'the qualities that make people good at sport are also the qualities that would enhance academic standing. The best athletes,' she continues, 'have learned to prioritize, to get things done.' As far as Spencer is concerned, the 'dumb jock' is a myth.

Other University of Alberta female athletes also benefitted from the women's movement. They received more money, more media attention and were able to take advantage of better coaching and facilities than had ever before been available. At the same time, however, the amount of money women received per capita was generally less than that allotted to men, while the media gave female sports nowhere near the attention received by that of males. And even women in the seventies, in deference to men, often had to use the lesser facilities for their practises.

The careers of Trix (Kannekans) Baker, Katharine Moore and Brenda (Whitley) Farr exemplify both the changes and the continued limitations in women's sport in the seventies. Baker was raised in Stettler, Alberta, not

a hotbed of opportunity by any means.⁹⁴ Her two older brothers were behind her interest in volleyball, basketball, track and badminton, and she pursued these through the school system. In university, she excelled as a basketball player while doing her Bachelor of Physical Education, being named an all-Canadian for three years as well as a Canada West all-star. She was named the Most Valuable Player when her team won a national championship in senior women's basketball.

The high point of these many achievements was a trip to Australia to represent Canada in women's basketball. For this endeavour, the Australian government donated \$10,000; the women also received some financial support from the Alberta Basketball Association. The team still had to raise much of its own money, though; Baker herself once sold thirteen cases of chocolate bars for the cause. She compares her situation with that of male players: 'Men always had more money. When I was in university, men's teams always went to the States while women's teams never did.'

But with the help of the Australian government and the public's appetite for chocolate, Baker and her team travelled to Australia. 'We went in July of 1985. We didn't do all that well; we had to play against some of the Olympic teams. But it was a wonderful experience, being able to travel that far and play.'

Baker completed a Master's degree in Physical Education in 1985 and has taught and coached women both at the University of Alberta and Grant McEwen Community College. She has used her sense of commitment, strengthened through sport, to continue as a coach, thus giving back to sport some of the benefits she has taken from it.

During the sixties, communities across Canada spent several thousand hours and several million dollars building sports facilities. Much of the cost in labour and capi-

⁹⁴Taped interview, Trix Baker, 27 May 1986.

tal was subsidized by federal government grants which seem spendthrift by today's standards. Many of us can certainly recall a plethora of 'Centennial projects' whose purpose was to help bolster both community and national pride in time for the 1967 celebration of a hundred years of confederation. Many of these projects were recreation centres, and they attest to the growing popularity of sport among ordinary Canadians. Katharine Moore remembers her sixties childhood as a period of burgeoning opportunities for the athletically inclined.⁹⁵ 'I was lucky enough to be competing at a time when girls' sport, and especially age-group girls' sport, was just getting started in the city.' She even recalls that, in her Edmonton neighborhood, there were more girls' teams than boys' teams, giving girls priority over boys for the time being, at least in baseball and basketball. At the University of Alberta, where she received an undergraduate degree in history and followed that with a Master's in Physical Education, she was able to travel ten times a season as a Panda basketball player and was funded by the Canadian Field Hockey Association for national tournaments in that particular sport.

But discrimination had not been wholly alleviated by the early seventies. Moore recalls that, in her first year at the university, the women were never scheduled to practise in the main gym; consequently, when they played they were as unfamiliar with the territory as were the opponents. As well, there was less publicity and promotion of the women's program, which, Moore adds, 'would remain a criticism today.'

Moore, like her peers and those who preceded and followed her, had the kind of desire that would make a male player stand out as a remarkable individual. In her best academic year at the University of Alberta, she took eight courses a term and played four hours a day. At the end of it she had an honours grade-point average and the Bakewell Trophy. Her explanation was simply that she was forced to

⁹⁵Taped interview, Katharine Moore, 4 September 1985.

use her time wisely. Moore currently holds a teaching position in Northern Ireland and, true to form, is finishing her doctorate in the history of sport at the same time.

Brenda (Whitley) Farr's first love was volleyball, which she learned to play in high school.⁹⁶ Before she went to university, her sporting activities stemmed from the school system, which, she says, had 'super' facilities. She had enough encouragement from her high school coaches and teammates to pursue her love of sports in university. Here she remembers 'seeing buckets of volleyballs, which kind of overwhelmed me.' Farr played volleyball on the Panda team and, as an all-star, travelled to Quebec City for the Winter Games. Her 'five years of hard work' as a university athlete won her the Bakewell Trophy in 1969 for 'sportsmanship and athletic participation.'

Graduation did not put an end to Farr's active athletic career, however. A few years after graduation, when Farr was pregnant with her second child, she was asked to coach a group of ex-Pandas for the 1979 Winter Games in Lethbridge. 'Theoretically,' says Farr, 'we should have been over the hill by that time, but we went and I coached them and we won the bronze medal. That got everybody pretty excited.' Farr and her team continue to play in the city league every Tuesday night in preparation for their next assault on the Winter Games, this time in Grande Prairie in 1980. 'And I'll be darned if we didn't win the gold medal then! And this was rather funny because none of us could jump any more.' Farr credits her team's experience for the defeat of younger teams whose members could 'jump twice as high as us and hit twice as hard.'

Family responsibilities prevented the team from trying a third Winter Games, but Farr by that time had become interested in racquet sports. She is a self-taught squash player, and is now a partner in the Argyll Court House, a Public facility for enthusiasts of racquetball and squash.

⁹⁶Taped interview, Brenda Farr, 10 April 1986.

The improved climate for women's sport made possible the emergence of many female stars during the peak of the revival of the women's movement. But these sports-women were not only aided by the movement, they also enhanced its progress. They did so by giving to women's sport a higher profile, their achievements causing an indifferent media to take notice of the women of the sports world. Susan Nattrass describes herself as a high profile person in a low profile sport.⁹⁷ Her sport is trapshooting, and she was the first woman to compete in that sport at the Olympics. She reached that pinnacle in 1976, as well as achieving the distinction of winning the Women's World Trapshooting Championships six times from 1974 to 1981.

Nattrass's sporting career could serve as a blueprint for any aspirant. Her beginning has two noteworthy characteristics. First, her parents were 'very open' about letting her do what she wanted to do athletically; as well, her father was a competitive trapshooter and Nattrass's 'role model.' Secondly, Nattrass was a 'generalist' in sports. She did a little of everything, including cycling, swimming and bowling, winning a city bowling championship at the age of twelve. She learned canoeing, archery and horseback riding at summer camp, while during the winter months in school, she played volleyball and basketball. Finally, she taught skiing and managed a swimming pool and intramural teams before she had graduated from university. Nattrass claims that her generalist approach was the key to her success. 'I learned tricks in one sport that could apply to another,' she points out. Ironically, she was able to avoid the pressure to specialize because, as she claims, she was a girl and was not expected to make a career of any single sport.

But while her leisure time was filling up with so many different sports, she was also becoming a shooting specialist, perhaps in spite of herself, or perhaps because competitive shooting doesn't require the full time dedication

⁹⁷Taped interview, Susan Nattrass, 10 April 1986.

of other sports. Shooting was seasonal for Natrass, a May-to-October endeavour. 'I quit shooting during the rest of the season.' Natrass started 'shooting' at the age of six when she'd watch her father's competitions and then imitate his and other competitors' styles. She took the sport seriously in junior high school, and several May-to-October practises since then have brought her the honours she has enjoyed. Apart from her six world titles, she has won innumerable North American events, collected golds at non-championship international meets and represented Canada on its International Trapshooting team since 1969. Such a record could not, of course, escape the notice of the solons of Canadian sport. Susan Natrass was named the Canadian Athlete of the year and, in 1981, was inducted as Officer of the Order of Canada, the highest honour than can be bestowed upon a civilian in Canada.

But Natrass would probably have gladly accepted other, more concrete, recognition as well. She estimates that it cost her from \$15,000 to \$20,000 per year to compete when she was winning her world titles. She received no government funding at all until 1974 when she was a silver medallist in the world championships, at which point the Shooting Federation of Canada met most of her expenses. 'But I had to pay for all the competitions that got me there. I'd be a rich woman today, otherwise.' She points out that she had to place in a world event in order to get funded while men received backing simply by being on the team. Things have improved since 1974, she notes, although her public sources ran dry after she finished fourth in 1985. 'With sport in Canada, if you win, you're fine.' It also helps to be in a high-profile sport, she adds, if one wants government funding.

Natrass claims that funding was her biggest hindrance, but there were others as well. In Europe, a shotgun-toting woman was not automatically accepted as an equal of her peers. Not only is the International Shooting Union not in favour of women's shooting, but 'every time I go to Italy I get these men asking me why I'm not at home

with a family....' Even the Soviets, 'who are so egalitarian in everything,' aren't encouraging their women to shoot. This cultural sanction against women trapshooters is slowly changing for the better with some organizations, says Natrass, and getting worse with others. And if she makes the 1988 Olympic team, which is her next goal, there will be no women's Olympic trapshooting. 'Whoever wants to go to the Olympics will have to beat the men.' On the whole, though, Natrass feels that athletic women are becoming more acceptable.

What women have gained on the courts, the fields and the tracks would probably not have been possible had it not been for the years of effort of intellectuals attempting to understand why athletic women have fared the way they have and what can be done to make the whole sporting scene more favourable for them. Among these, Ann Hall, Debra Shogan and Wendy Bedingfield stand out for the contributions they have made to academic literature on sports. Of course, they are not the only women in this history to have made their marks as academics in the sports world. Others are Ruby Anderson, Katharine Moore, Andrea Borys, Susan Natrass and Elsie McFarland. But Hall, Shogan and Bedingfield exemplify new trends in the study of sport; they are three women in three different and very new fields. Hall has combined the phenomena of the women's movement and academic specialization to develop a controversial and evocative feminist analysis of sport sociology. Shogan is examining the relationship to argue for more equitable treatment of female athletes. Bedingfield is a sportscientist studying, among other things, the biomechanics of the ski-jumper's body as it sails off the end of a ramp.

Ann Hall is a distinguished researcher in the relatively new field of sport sociology, and she is concerned with a myriad of questions associated with gender and sport.⁹⁸ These questions did not intrude upon her life as a child

⁹⁸Taped interview, Ann Hall, 25 March 1986.

in the Ontario of the late forties and early fifties, nor upon her undergraduate years at Queen's University. Throughout these years she was enthusiastic about sport, beginning as a 'tomboy' playing street football, then delving into canoeing and rowing, skating, and finally, four years of intercollegiate basketball.

Hall entered the Faculty of Physical Education at Queen's University against the better judgment of her parents who didn't think she should be attempting to make a career of her love of sport. 'I finished high school in 1960. We didn't know at that time what routes there were in physical education. I never dreamt, for example, that I would end up teaching at a university.'

Hall remembers Queen's as 'a wonderful place.' In 1960 it was a small university, her Physical Education class a tiny group of fifteen. These advantages outweighed, at the time, the fact that physical education had not yet matured as an academic discipline. There was no philosophy, sociology, history or psychology of sport. Thus, Hall was a member of the generation which first undertook research in one of these areas. 'There was a group of us who began to see that there was a lot more to physical education than we had been taught in our undergraduate years.'

Following on the heels of Hall's realization that her physical education had been incomplete was her growing awareness of the oppression that women in sport were being forced to endure. In the early seventies she came into conflict with the conservatism of some national sports organizations and realized that no one, neither the heads of the organizations nor the women in them, was willing to see any change. Hall searched for other channels to express her concerns about women in sport and thus became a founding member of the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee. From there, her ideas and her career mushroomed. 'I began to look at the feminist analysis of Western society, in theory but in practise as well, because I was in the trenches of the women's movement. I thought we had to bring women in sport into this. What has hap-

pened since is that a feminist consciousness has emerged out of women in sport.' Hall and her female colleagues decided to tackle the issues concerning sport and feminism by organizing; she thus became a founder of another women's organization, the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport. Her goal is an ongoing one; she would like to convince people that there exists a sophisticated, interesting and exciting feminist analysis of Western culture that is applicable to every aspect of our lives, including sport.

The struggle towards this goal has engendered some sophisticated, interesting, and exciting research on the part of Ann Hall. She has written about women in sports administration, about the history of sporting women, about the female experience in sport and about gender inequality as it relates to sport.⁹⁹ The feminist analysis of our culture, says Hall, recognizes first of all 'that the split in the roles of men and women which has structured our civilization for centuries, and [which] has been perpetuated on the grounds of efficiency, is oppressive to women.'¹⁰⁰ This split is also called the sexual division of labour, and we have seen that it is this division which, in spite of all the changes which have occurred in women's economic roles in the twentieth century, has never before been overtly challenged on the scale we are seeing today.¹⁰¹ The division of labour by sex assumes that a woman has one special function to perform—that of child-

⁹⁹see, for example, *Fair Ball: Towards Sex Equality in Canadian Sport* (with Dorothy A. Richardson), Published by The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1982; 'Sport, Sex Roles and Sex Identity', *The CRIAW Papers* (Ottawa: The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 1981); 'Feminism and Sport', *The Female Athlete*, Proceedings of a national conference about women in sports and recreation, March 21-23, 1980 (Institute for Human Performance, Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, 1980), pp. 158-161.

¹⁰⁰Hall, 'Feminism and Sport', p. 159.

¹⁰¹Chafe, p. 253.

bearing—and that whatever else she does must not interfere with this function. In play and games, says Hall, the women's place is reinforced from childhood:

...boys are directed towards instrumental activities that are more goal-oriented and useful later in the realm of work and career, whereas girls still tend to be encouraged in activities which are expressive, thereby developing skills for future roles as wife and mother.¹⁰²

In sport, as in life, the instrumental and the expressive are forms of what sociologists refer to as sex-role stereotyping. For Hall, it is the social functions of this stereotyping that is 'the most significant for the sports world.'¹⁰³

Sex-role stereotyping assumes that certain traits are 'masculine', others 'feminine.' In sport, the traits of aggression, competitiveness and physical power that we associate with most successful athletes are considered to be 'masculine' traits, while grace, beauty, sex-appeal, weakness and passivity are considered to be 'feminine.' In life we find the adherence to these distinctions expressed as dislike of aggressive or competitive career women; in sport, we see these distinctions in negative attitudes toward sporting women. Competent females engaged in 'contact' sports such as hockey or softball are often considered to be 'unfeminine'; sports emphasizing grace and beauty, such as figure skating, are considered appropriate because they enhance what society accepts as 'feminine' qualities.¹⁰⁴

Moreover, sports journalism consistently reinforces 'masculine' and 'feminine' attributes in the athletes it presents to the public. A pitcher in baseball, for example, is described in terms of the power and control of his throw, while his teammates are noted for their running, base-stealing or hitting ability. We would never read an account

¹⁰²Hall, 'Feminism and Sport', p. 160.

¹⁰³ibid, p. 160.

¹⁰⁴Hall, 'Sex Roles'.

of how a pitcher's body appeared, its curves outlined beneath his snug Expos uniform as he wound up for his fast ball. But in *Sports Illustrated* of August 23, 1971, and repeated with reference to other female athletes in slightly different forms all over North America before and since, we have this description of a female professional golfer:

...her perfectly tanned, well-formed legs [were] swinging jauntily. The hair on her tapered arms was bleached absolutely white against a milk-chocolate tan. Her platinum hair was pulled smartly back in a Viking-maiden braid.¹⁰⁵

The pitcher is powerful and skilled, or 'instrumental'; the woman golfer merely sexy, or 'expressive.'

One of the most significant aspects of Ann Hall's work has been to take these notions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' to task. She points out that 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are cultural constructs which reflect our society's assumptions of how males and females ought to behave. In other words, the only 'sex-roles' are those which exist in our collective consciousness. The purpose of the feminist analysis of both sport and culture is to make us aware of the artificiality of these divisions.¹⁰⁶ The outcome, Hall hopes, will be an increased acceptance of women in all kinds of sports, including contact sports, and the corresponding disappearance of the stigma of 'unfeminine' behaviour.

Like Ann Hall, Debra Shogan completed a doctorate in Physical Education at the University of Alberta, although her research deals with moral education rather than sport sociology. Again like Hall, Shogan was not simply an academic; she also coached Panda basketball for a total of eleven years.¹⁰⁷ Prior to her arrival at the U of A, she had played basketball as a Huskiette at the University of

¹⁰⁵Gilbert and Williamson, 'Sport', p. 96.

¹⁰⁶Hall, 'Sex Roles', p. 35

¹⁰⁷Taped interview, Debra Shogan, 27 February 1986.

Saskatchewan and was on the team which won a bronze medal at the Canada Winter Games in 1971. Shogan recalls that, as a player, she received little moral support other than that provided by her parents and teammates. Her parents allowed her to be involved in sport, which Shogan considers to have been important because sport in the late fifties and early sixties was still considered inappropriate for girls. Her teammates provided an understanding of female involvement in sport which was lacking in most other people. 'Not many people outside your actual team understand what you are doing or why,' Shogan explains. It was puzzling why women would want to participate in sport, 'so the encouragement had to come from yourselves or the people you were associated with.'

Shogan took her undergraduate degree in Ontario; thus, she was able to compare eastern and western attitudes. She found that Ontario was less forthcoming than Saskatchewan in its support of women's athletics. 'Western Canada was quite advanced,' she notes, in providing funds for both coaching staff and travel. As a basketball player, she also saw instances of discrimination, although not in major areas of coaching or programming. 'It was in the little things,' she notes. 'For example, players might not want to buy their own shoes so coaches would get shoe companies to sponsor them. This was easily done for male players but not for females.' And lack of sponsorship means lack of money and thus lack of involvement in sport.

Being a female athlete and witnessing 'the little things' which meant women could not take their sporting opportunities for granted got Debra Shogan interested in the ethics of involvement in sport. For her, the major issue is 'where women will play and with whom.' For example, she believes that pre-pubescent girls skilled enough to play hockey on boys' teams must be permitted to do so if there are no girls' teams. Shogan believes that some boundaries separating girls and boys and women and men are arbitrary and artificial ones. 'Seven and nine year olds should be playing together,' she claims, 'and sports where the

strength and size factors are not important shouldn't be separated.'

Hers is a timely argument and has a North America-wide context. In a study published in *Sports Illustrated* in 1973, the authors discovered two reasons why organizers thought females should remain segregated in sports where physical strength was not a factor. The first was the alleged health hazard that 'contact' sport, such as Little League baseball, would pose to girls. Boys were supposed to be faster and stronger and 'have less fragile bones' than girls. The second reason was based less on supposition and more on observation, and that reason was that 'males simply cannot tolerate a serious challenge from a women.' One American coach commented:

There is the possibility that a boy would be beaten by a girl and as a result be ashamed to face his family and friends. I wonder if anybody has stopped to think what that could do to a young boy.¹⁰⁸

Another coach cited an incident where a woman had beaten a man in an intervarsity singles tennis match. 'The boy she beat was embarrassed to death. It ruined him.' More recently, Sandy O'Brien spoke of a woman wrestler at the University of Alberta who had to wrestle with men for lack of female competition. The male wrestlers, she remarks rather ironically, had a problem. 'Their careers would be ruined if she had a good match with them.'¹⁰⁹

Debra Shogan is also concerned with equal opportunity for women and men in sport and, while 'equal opportunity' possibly begins with desegregation of children's sports, it does not end there. Shogan would point out that desegregation is not necessarily the right approach for all sports; therefore, one must consider how the goal of equal opportunity can be realized by other means.

¹⁰⁸Bil Gilbert and Nancy Williamson, 'Programmed to be Losers,' *Sports Illustrated*, 38:23 (11 June 1973), p. 60.

¹⁰⁹Taped interview, Sandra O'Brien, 4 February 1986.

Equality of opportunity has different meanings for different people. For one sociologist the term refers to equal opportunity for males and females to compete for a place on a team.¹¹⁰ However, if the athletes were past childhood and competing for places on the same team in a sport where size and strength were significant factors, it is easy to see that females would be at a decided disadvantage. For Shogan, equal opportunity is related to equality of benefit; the latter condition would require that 'all...benefit at each level of sport in numbers proportionate to their numbers in the larger population,'¹¹¹ or that all be given the same opportunity to benefit if they choose to do so. The key to equal opportunity in this sense is, of course, money.

There are, not surprisingly, counter-arguments to Shogan's position, all of them directly or indirectly monetary in origin. One claims that traditional male sports are expensive, hence the greater financial commitment to them. Another avers that the quality of competition in male sports is superior; thus, male sports are more popular and generate larger gate receipts than that of females. Shogan would respond that the expenses of male sport are not necessarily justified. 'If larger budgets are required for male sport because of expensive equipment, the question still remains whether we should choose to spend money on expensive equipment for a few rather than distribute the money so more individuals can participate.'¹¹² Secondly, she argues that gate receipts do not justify financial discrimination. The purpose of amateur sport is not, after all, to raise money, but to provide a certain type of experience for participants.' Besides, there is little indication that gate receipts even come close to meeting the

¹¹⁰Ramon Lemos, 'Athletics, Gender and Justice', *Women, Philosophy and Sport*, Betsy C. Postow, Ed. (Metuchen, N.J.: The scarecrow Press, Inc. 1983), p. 54.

¹¹¹Debra Shogan, 'Equality: Women and Opportunity', Abstract, 1986.

¹¹²ibid

expenses of amateur sport. A look at the 1974 University of Alberta Athletics budget illustrates this point. Altogether, \$32,698.00 was spent on hockey and football, while these two sports were expected to generate only \$8,500.00 at the gate. In fact, the bulk of income in the 1974 budget, \$144,000.00, was expected to be generated by student fees, exacted in equal amounts from both male and female students.¹¹³

As with the desegregation question, the arguments against equal opportunity probably stem more from what males have to lose than from the belief that females are not up to scratch. In most North American colleges, communities and schools athletic budgets have been stretched to the limit. It is unlikely that, if women were to be given equal funding, the money could come from anywhere but boys' and men's programs, with a consequent diminishing of their present resources. Moreover, in many cases facilities are already crowded. A Harvard professor pointed out that if 'women suddenly began using public and private athletic facilities to even half the extent they are used by men, then the overcrowding would be catastrophic.'¹¹⁴

Shogan has her work cut out for her. Her contentions go far beyond the isolated questions of why females should have equal opportunity in sport and how they can attain that goal. She, along with others concerned with ethics in sport, are challenging some cherished assumptions that men hold about themselves, about women, and about the positions of the sexes relative to one another.

Wendy (Andrews) Bedingfield is another academic in a relatively new field, that of sportscience. Sportscience and its corollary, sportsmedicine, are concerned with applying principles of physiology, biomechanics and medicine to sport. Through these two disciplines, doctors and researchers are discovering how the human body adjusts

¹¹³*The Gateway*, 14 February 1974, p. 7.

¹¹⁴Gilbert and Williamson, 'Losers', p. 62.

to training, whether chemically or biomechanically, and thus are assisting coaches in formulating training programs which enable athletes to meet their maximum potential.

Bedingfield grew up in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, where she played team sports in junior high school.¹¹⁵ She feels that she was 'poorly trained and poorly taught' as a young athlete, a disadvantage that 'was part of growing up in a have-not province.' She was compensated for her lack of training by her father's inspiring example; a war amputee, he continued to swim and exercise despite the loss of a leg.

After completing graduate work at the University of Oregon in 1970, Bedingfield coached volleyball, first at Acadia University and later at the University of Alberta. It was in this capacity that she became interested in sport-science and decided to do a doctorate in biomechanics at Indiana University. During the course of her research, she became aware of discrimination against women in the world of sport. In sportscience, for example, Bedingfield notes that 'the scientists are male, the perspective is male, and the administrators are male.' In such a situation, not much North American interest has, in the past, been expressed in finding out how women can achieve their potential, what training programs would suit women, and in what specific sports they might have an advantage over men.

By contrast, East Germany has poured one-half of its sportscience research into studying its women athletes, much of which is carried out at the German University for Physical Culture in Leipzig. The research involves filming the athlete in action in order for biomechanical specialists to analyze her performance style in detail. Individual muscles are tested for weakness, and the athlete's training program adjusted accordingly. Blood tests, before and after maximum effort, determine whether or not oxygen is being used efficiently. All of this information is analyzed and

¹¹⁵Taped interview, Wendy Bedingfield, 28 April 1986.

stored on a computer; from it a coach can map out a training schedule designed to utilize the athlete's physiological capabilities to their maximum.

The East Germans' efforts to understand the physical make-up of their women athletes is reflected in their international performances. Always leaders in the competition for medals, East German women come closer to men's performance standards in several events than do women of other countries. Bedingfield hopes to bring to Canadian sportscience research the emphasis on women athletes which would, in turn, enable these athletes to bring medals to Canada and satisfaction to themselves.¹¹⁶

Sportscience, sportsmedicine, the awareness of the ethical problems associated with women's deprivation of the sporting experience, and the women's movement have engendered profound changes in sport and in men's and women's involvement in it. There is no doubt that girls and women have benefitted, and will continue to benefit, from the efforts of those who, through both effort and example, have paved a smoother road for female athletes of the future. But there remains much ground to be covered, and the women in our story have different ideas regarding what goals remain and how they should be attained. As athletic women enter a bright but uncertain future, they would do well to find their direction through the experienced voices of the University of Alberta women who have preceded them.

¹¹⁶K.F. Dyer, *Challenging the Men: The Social Biology of Female Sporting Achievement* (St. Lucia, N.Y.: University of Queensland Press, 1982), pp. 209-213.

*Hopes, Fears
and Possibilities*

University of Alberta women athletes have remarked on the trends in women's sport, some with misgivings, others with cautious hope. Andrea Borys notes that 'sports are becoming fashionable for women,' and most of the women in this history would agree.¹¹⁷ 'Women don't sit on the sidelines any more,' claims Sandy O'Brien.¹¹⁸ Her own specialty, gymnastics, is becoming analagous to boys' hockey; most gymnastics clubs are girls' clubs, and more and more girls are enlisting every day. Part of the reason for this trend is the slow change in social attitudes towards athletic women. Ethel Cuts believes that:

...there is a trend to looking at women, not as lilies to be protected but as people who have physical reserves and who are able to participate in gruelling sports.¹¹⁹

A game such as volleyball, for example, is 'a totally different game,' according to Beverly Spencer. 'There is more jumping and more spiking; these changes indicate a reali-

¹¹⁷Taped interview, Andrea Borys

¹¹⁸Taped interview, Sandra O'Brien

¹¹⁹Taped interview, Ethel Cuts.

zation on the part of coaches of what girls are capable of.¹²⁰

Better knowledge of nutrition as well as the change in attitude, has helped to enhance women's potential. Ursula Sterling does not recall any special emphasis on diet in the twenties, although she and her teammates knew to steer away from certain foods just before a game. 'Some foods would make you stupid if you ate them before you played,' she explains.¹²¹ Inez Calhoun notes that a dietitian supervised the preparation of residence meals, but there were no special provisions made for athletes.¹²² Some definite progress has been made since Vera Crockford received her bottle of cascara. Sportscience and sportsmedicine are always emphasizing diet, with rigorous attention to the athlete's food intake at various stages of training. Apart from the increased levels of skill which attention to diet helps to promote, better eating habits in the early years of life improve women's inherent potential. For example, Mary Gander points out that female basketball players are a foot taller, on the average, than in the thirties when she was playing.¹²³

Women also have better access to facilities than previously, the big gym/small gym discrepancy no longer applying in most cases. A possible exception is women's use of 'masculine' facilities such as the weight training room at the University of Alberta. The scene is changing even there now, says Sandy O'Brien, but until very recently it was not a place where women felt very welcome. 'It was crowded, smelly, and dominated by men,' notes O'Brien. 'I used to go in there and as you walk in everything would sort of stop. Like, 'okay, let's watch and see what *she's* going to do with the weights'That would make you think twice about going in there.' Still, she adds,

¹²⁰Taped interview, Beverly Spencer.

¹²¹Taped interview, Ursula Sterling.

¹²²Taped interview, Inez Calhoun.

¹²³Taped interview, Mary Gander.

women are feeling more welcome in traditionally male sports; soccer, for example, is the faster growing female sport in Canada.¹²⁴

Government programs are also helping to make sport a woman's as well as a man's domain. Eileen Harle credits *Participaction* with making people aware of physical well-being and with helping to create a positive image of women in sport. The result is that 'women learn to play with more confidence.'¹²⁵ The Charter of Rights has helped, too, claims Wendy Bedingfield. Where all else fails, legal redress can help women find their place in sports.¹²⁶ On the whole, says Andrea Borys, 'the climate couldn't be better for promoting women's sport.' One can get a feel for this climate in department store windows, where aerobic outfits and jogging suits for women are colourful, attractive and fashionable.¹²⁷

This positive outlook should be regarded cautiously, say many of the University of Alberta women. For one thing, early specialization is viewed with decided trepidation. Betty Fisher believes that the need to specialize early and the pressure to excel means that certain things have to be sacrificed, particularly the ability to experience a wide variety of activities.¹²⁸ June Coyle calls this emphasis on specialization 'unfortunate'. Moreover, the influence of professional and Olympic sports has made sports big business, and Jean Robertson fears that the commercialization of sport and the monetary emphasis on big-name athletes means less opportunity for ordinary people.¹²⁹ 'There is too much emphasis on the skilled,' adds Ethel Cuts, 'and not enough on the general population.'¹³⁰

¹²⁴Taped interview, Sandra O'Brien.

¹²⁵Taped interview, Eileen Harle

¹²⁶Taped interview, Wendy Bedingfield.

¹²⁷Taped interview, Andrea Borys.

¹²⁸Taped interview, Betty Jean Fisher.

¹²⁹Taped interview, Jean Robertson.

¹³⁰Taped interview, Ethel Cuts.

Marion Irwin points out that participation in sports has yet to be fully democratized. 'A number of lower income women just can't participate under current conditions,' she says, 'and yet these are the people who really need it. The single parent, who is usually a women, has difficulty finding either the time or the money for sport. In other words, the facilities are there but there remain conditions in our society which prevent a large number of women from participating in sport.'¹³¹

There are also shortcomings in the school system. Andrea Borys believes what an unimaginative curriculum in the public school system is 'turning girls off.' While she doesn't believe that all school girls can become elite-level competitors or that they should want to, she does feel that the curriculum should encourage them to find a sport that they will enjoy throughout their lives. 'They should have opportunities to develop their skills and have a broad range of activities in junior high school. By high school, they should be thinking about their leisure time as adults and making choices, so that as adults they won't feel like fools.'¹³² Like Borys, Audrey Ackroyd is also dissatisfied with athletics programs for girls in the public school system. Yet it is here, she feels, that athletes must get their start. 'If we lose them at the elementary level, we've lost them.' She contends that private businesses teaching courses such as aerobics are making money 'because the schools haven't done the job.' Moreover, she would like to see more attention paid to developing a love of activity in everyone and less to pampering 'gifted' young athletes. After all, she says, 'we're not all going to be stars, but we should all have the opportunity to play at the level we choose.'¹³³

How is the goal of increased participation by women to be realized? Wendy Bedingfield says that it is the cul-

¹³¹Taped interview, Marion Irwin.

¹³²Taped interview, Andrea Borys.

¹³³Taped interview, Audrey Ackroyd.

mination of a process that begins at the age of five years, when a little girl first learning various sports has a teacher or coach who provides her with a model. Bedingfield tells of attending a coaches' clinic in 1985 with 39 other coaches of young children. She was the only woman. And in the community league where she coached, only three of the seventeen five and six year olds in her care were girls. The problem, says Bedingfield, is two-fold. First, girls are less encouraged to be 'sporty', athleticism still being seen by many as the province of boys and men. Secondly, once girls decide to participate, their role models are men. Notes Andrea Borys: 'If girls don't see women coaching, they don't see coaching as a possibility for themselves.'¹³⁴

But Elsie McFarland doesn't believe that role models are enough. Attitudes, too, have to be positive if women are to be motivated to participate in sports. She feels that, in the past, too much emphasis has been placed on men's sports. At the University of Alberta, for example, 'they seemed to think that the Pandas basketball game had to come early in the evening and that the men were the *coup de grace*. There was an assumption that women weren't the crowd pleasers.' Now, she says, 'they've even tried to have the Pandas on second once in awhile. I think they'll find that women are the crowd pleasers in a lot of cases in the future.'¹³⁵ Many women felt that the media had been guilty of harbouring the same assumptions. Recalling that, as both player and coach, she had to beg for coverage, Betty Jean Harvie points out that more coverage means more public interest, which in turn means more opportunities for travel.¹³⁶ Debra Shogan adds that, in her experience, 'women often had better records, but men got more publicity.'¹³⁷ That situation, some feel, is changing

¹³⁴Taped interview, Andrea Borys.

¹³⁵Taped interview, Elsie McFarland.

¹³⁶Taped interview, Betty Jean Harvie.

¹³⁷Taped interview, Debra Shogan.

for the better, albeit slowly. Brenda Farr notes that men once consistently dominated media coverage. Now, though, 'they televise a whole women's volleyball game.' And they've learned how to do it, too, different camera angles capturing the action which had once been virtually frozen when one camera was positioned, unimaginatively and statically, at the net.¹³⁸

Featuring the Pandas over the Golden Bears and televising women's volleyball are only tiny steps toward developing an atmosphere conducive to maximum female enthusiasm for sport. In many other respects, women's involvement in sport seems to be going backward instead of forward, partly because of its higher profile rather than in spite of it. Borys points out that as women's athletics gains greater prominence and prestige, more and more men are coaching women's teams. When, for example, she coached women's volleyball in 1970, all of her colleagues were women. Yet in a scant space of fifteen years, the women have virtually disappeared. This is only one example of what seems to be a nation-wide trend at all levels of sport, from community leagues like Bedingfield's, to the public school system, to intercollegiate and even international sport. One study has shown that two-thirds of all physical education teachers and coaches in the public school system are men, despite the predominance of women in the teaching profession. It may be that, as Borys suggests, this situation is simply a manifestation of the continuation of the general attitude that men are preferable for teaching physical education, an attitude especially prevalent in rural areas. It may also be a result of the family structure in our society. 'A man can coach, go home and have his supper there and ready,' says Borys. A woman cannot do that.'¹³⁹

The decline of women in coaching positions has been matched by a like decline in numbers of women adminis-

¹³⁸Taped interview, Brenda Farr.

¹³⁹Taped interview, Andrea Borys.

trators in the sports world. The assumption that men are preferable may exist here as well. Borys, who was involved in the Canadian Women's Intercollegiate Athletic Union before 1970, saw that body spearhead university women into national and international competitions. With funding from Fitness Canada for competitions, it appeared for a time to be establishing Canadian university women's sport on the world map. In 1978, however, the Women's and Men's Intercollegiate Athletic Unions amalgamated and, in the words of Wendy Bedingfield, 'immediately the women administrators in the country disappeared. In 1980 there were twenty women and sixty men at the national meeting.'¹⁴⁰ Were women losing interest? No, she declares. Instead:

...as long as women were running their own athletic association, they were able to do the things that were important to women and there's no question that women see sport somewhat differently than men....[After the amalgamation] the men held the purse strings and men's sports are seen as more important by society in general. Woman had either to adopt men's models or move out—they had no power to keep their own ideas about sport.¹⁴¹

The result was that today there are very few women in positions of power in university athletics, perhaps only three or four who actually control a budget. And control of a sport means essentially control of a budget.

When they discuss these trends, University of Alberta sportswomen always have in mind what they would like the situation for sporting women to be. In other words, there are hopes for the future as well as trends, visions of an ideal for women who want to participate in some athletic endeavour. Some women, such as Brenda Farr, feel that an ideal situation would be where women have left their bridge and knitting clubs to pursue fitness through

¹⁴⁰Taped interview, Wendy Bedingfield.

¹⁴¹ibid

sports.¹⁴² Patricia Meadus and Beverly Spencer believe that the ideal situation is one which allows everyone regardless of age or sex to reach the potential they would like to reach.¹⁴³ Katharine Moore would agree, adding that if a girl or women wishes to reach her potential even in a contact sport, she should be encouraged to do so, and as early as possible. A personal experience led to this conclusion:

One of my bitterest childhood memories was reaching Grade Seven and being told that I could no longer play ice hockey when it was my favourite game.¹⁴⁴

Ruby Anderson and Jean Harvie echo the same sentiments. Anderson's ideal is for women to have 'equal opportunity for participation at all levels,' and more women role models to encourage this, while Harvie would like to see women's participation enhanced by competent coaching, equal access to facilities and as many opportunities to compete as possible.¹⁴⁵ Debra Shogan has an ideal for women at the competitive level. 'They should be able to train as hard as they want and compete in an environment where they don't feel that another group is thought to be more important.'¹⁴⁶ Brenda Farr also feels that comparing women to this 'other group' should cease. 'Men's and women's basketball are two different games,' she points out, yet women's abilities are too often compared unfavourably with men's. Pat Jackson summarizes these ideals with her own. Women, she feels, should receive the same emphasis on personal excellence, and they should be encouraged to reach a highly tuned level of skill through a broad base of community support. Lastly, their leaders in coaching and administration should be female, and

¹⁴²Taped interview, Brenda Farr.

¹⁴³Taped interview, Beverly Spencer.

¹⁴⁴Taped interview, Katharine Moore.

¹⁴⁵Taped interviews, Ruby Anderson, Betty Jean Harvie.

¹⁴⁶Taped interview, Debra Shogan.

women must not be stymied by either overt or covert discrimination.¹⁴⁷

Some women believed the ideal situation for women wanting to participate in sport to be embodied in an attitude. Betty Fisher feels that women must accept being active, while Sandy O'Brien adds: 'Whatever excites you or brings you out of your shell is what you should do. You shouldn't sign up just to lose weight; you should *like* to do it.'¹⁴⁸ Elsie McFarland is alarmed by some of the attitudes betrayed by big-time sports. 'Some of our professional sports train people to hate the opponent. This [attitude] has no place in sport. Wayne Gretzky should be a role model for ideals as well as talent.'¹⁴⁹ McFarland would also like to see 'a balance between what the individual has to give of herself and what she is given.' Athletes, male or female, should realize that 'the state doesn't owe them everything.'

Perhaps the ideal which most directly addresses current conditions and which most fundamentally challenges attitudes toward women in society as well as in sport is that of Wendy Bedingfield. She feels that women's sport will have come of age 'when girls are as equally likely as boys to be encouraged by parents, or are equally likely to want to be in sports. I would like to pick up the paper one day,' she continues, 'and read, for example, 'Canada's basketball team defeats Uruguay', and not know whether it's a men's team or a women's team whose victory is being reported. When the gender question has disappeared—that's the ideal.'¹⁵⁰

Most of the women felt that the pursuit of any of these ideals should begin in childhood, and the personal experiences of the vast majority of them would support their contentions. The Smith children, for example, had the en-

¹⁴⁷Taped interview, Pat Jackson.

¹⁴⁸Taped interviews, Betty Fisher, Sandra O'Brien.

¹⁴⁹Taped interview, Elsie McFarland.

¹⁵⁰Taped interview, Wendy Bedingfield.

couragement, support and—occasionally—prodding of their parents to get them to the pool before they were six and, during their competitive years, before six a.m. Eileen Harle believes that parents should encourage initiative in their children, since youngsters don't know what sports can do for them until they try them. Andrea Borys, Susan Natrass, Wendy Bedingfield, Kathleen Leitch, Beverly Spencer and Pat Meadus had athletic fathers who became their role models, while Juliet McMaster, Sandy O'Brien and June Coyle remember their mothers' active roles in getting them involved. Even passive support helped. In the era when sport was considered unfeminine, simple lack of parental resistance to tomboyish behaviour was beneficial to Debra Shogan, Mary Gander, Betty Fisher and Ann Hall.

In their discussions of trends, ideals and childhood encouragement, the women in our history are, of course, assuming that to be involved in sport is a good thing. Most of us assume the same. Headlines about drug abusing basketball stars, wife-beating football players, fights in the hockey rinks, and injury and even death on the fields of play have not changed our minds. What is behind the assumption that sport is a valuable asset to the individual? Women athletes associated with the University of Alberta have a variety of convincing answers to that question. Audrey Ackroyd believes that sport helps one to function better as a human being. 'You learn about yourself, how to be socially adjusted, how to control your emotions.' Cuts, Calhoun, Crockford, Fisher, Meadus and Irwin can speak of confidence, fair-mindedness, a sense of commitment, co-operativeness and self-discipline as qualities enhanced through sport. None of these, they would point out, is necessarily part of winning. Ethel Cuts reminds us that in competition, 'you lose more than you win.' Moore and Harle add that these qualities are transferred to daily life; Harle tells of a woman in an aerobics class whose increased fitness and confidence in her physical aptitude later gave her the courage to learn to drive a car. And Bedingfield

points out that male politicians are often former sport stars. Perhaps, she suggests, studies might show that female public figures have similar backgrounds. June Coyle, Ursula Sterling and Juliet McMaster would probably agree. Coyle feels that sport teaches a person how to perform in a crisis situation, while Sterling and McMaster believe that some sports increase mental acuity; all are qualities essential to political life. Finally, Gail Ross feels that, in the special realm of horse sports, one learns a sense of responsibility. 'You have a horse that you can't mistreat without it coming back on you.' One also learns to overcome fear. If the challenges of riding a jumper make one fearful, and those challenges are met, 'nothing can make you quite as afraid again.'

Then there is the simple consideration of health. The Canadian government has always had the high cost of physical debility in mind when it kept its foot in the door of athletics programs. Previously, that cost meant a drain of military manpower; today it means a drain of increasingly spare public coffers. The government concern for health is matched by that of university women athletes themselves, Eileen Harle, for one, pointing out that sports such as swimming develop improved cardio-vascular function.

The University of Alberta women in our history thus make a good case for a push for increased female involvement in sport. Although Harry Edwards in *The Sociology of Sport* could find no convincing proof that sport built character, developed self-discipline or promoted physical and mental fitness, the personal experiences of U of A women allow us to draw the tentative conclusion that involvement in sport is beneficial in these respects. If this is the case, then the hopes and fears expressed by the women athletes in these pages deserve the attention of school systems, athletics boards and the public conscience.

Conclusion

In the last fifteen years, our society's growing acceptance of women's participation in sport has resulted in many beneficial changes. Young women today have more opportunities to engage in sport than ever before, while communities, schools, and universities are providing them with more and better sports equipment, coaches and facilities. As well, modern women can choose from a great variety of sports, whether individual, aesthetically oriented ones such as gymnastics, or team sports such as soccer. Furthermore, whether they are concerned about efficiency, comfort or fashion, women can select from rack upon rack of colourful, carefully designed sports clothing, whose very existence attests to the increased social acceptance of female sports enthusiasts.

The acceptance is self-perpetuating. First, the old taboos about health and 'femininity' are crumbling beneath the weight of academic scrutiny, while the female stars of sport are giving new prestige to women's athletics. This kind of attention has helped to turn the public's focus on female athletes from one of patronizing interest in appearance and feminine behaviour to one of critical assessment of performance. This shift in focus is manifested in different ways, among them, more extensive and responsible media coverage of women's events as well as increased

scientific research into the physiology of the female athlete. Finally, the outcome of these developments has been to further society's perceptions of women athletes as athletes, rather than as anomalous social deviants. Thus, they are at last taking a respected place alongside their male counterparts on the fields and in the pools, courts and gymnasia. Young women engaged in sport today can only hope that this change will prove to be permanent.

If they were to examine the women's movement in its modern form, these young athletes would perhaps find this hope to be quite reasonable. Modern feminists are no longer afraid to criticize society's most cherished institutions—including the sacrosanct one of the nuclear family—and to agitate for changes which would give women a fairer share of the economy, careers and leisure activities. Historians have pointed out that, in the past, women fought for rights unsuccessfully because they failed to mount a serious challenge to the foundation of their inequality, the sexual division of labour. In the modern women's movement, however, changes in social structure have made this challenge possible. In North America today, an unprecedented number of families are headed solely by women, while in many others economic survival depends on two incomes. Under these circumstances alone, a renewal of the 'back to the home' movement would be either ridiculed or ignored. The sheer numbers of working women heighten our society's acceptance of the changed economic structure by providing role models for other women and by blurring the imaginary line separating 'masculine' and 'feminine' personality characteristics. And as in life, so in sports. Both men and women are less likely today to ask themselves whether a certain sport is 'appropriate' for females, and female athletes are refusing to tolerate attacks on their sexuality which often result from their too-great proficiency in a particularly vigorous sport.

The relatively favourable circumstances in which modern female athletes find themselves was reached only

through the efforts and examples of their predecessors. Among these, the women connected with the University of Alberta have been influential in every facet of the sports world. They have been administrators, coaches, performers, teachers and academics. They set examples for beginning athletes. They helped to design school programs that would get more girls involved. They encouraged children, including their own, to develop a love of sport. They entered competitions women hadn't entered before. They agitated for more money for female athletes. They influenced the institution of sport through their academic scholarship, criticizing that institution's weaknesses and suggesting alternate approaches. Finally, they articulated ideas that would provide the foundation for new visions of the sporting world. Without their individual contributions, none of the gains which have been made would have been possible.

Knowing what the women coming before them have accomplished should help to give today's sports-minded undergraduates a sense of their own responsibilities. Not every battle has been won. The Pandas have yet to receive the press coverage accorded the Golden Bears, and the declining numbers of women physical education teachers, administrators and elite-level coaches should alarm anyone concerned about the status of women in sport. And little girls still do not have the same sporting opportunities as little boys. It will be up to the athletes, academics, teachers, coaches and parents of the future to continue the struggle, so that any girl or women who wants to participate in a favourite sport does so, to whatever level she is capable of, for as many years as she wishes.

*List of University of
Alberta Sportswomen
Interviewed, with
Date of Interview*

Ruby Anderson, 19 April 1986
Audrey (Carson) Ackroyd, 23 June 1986
Beatrice (Kannekans) Baker, 27 May 1986
Wendy (Andrews) Bedingfield, 28 April 1986
Andrea Borys, 24 May 1986
Inez Calhoun, 11 March 1986
June Coyle, 19 April 1986
Vera (Palmer) Crockford, 28 May 1986
Ethel (Barnett) Cuts, 25 July 1985
Donna Kay (Huestis) Enger, 11 March 1986
Brenda (Whitley) Farr, 10 April 1986
Betty Jean Fisher, 21 March 1986
Mary (Frost) Gander, 24 January 1986
M. Ann Hall, 25 March 1986
Eileen (Nicol) Harle, 6 March 1986
B. Jean Harvie, 21 April 1986
Marion Irwin, 11 March 1986
Patricia Jackson, 14 July 1986
Kathleen (McIntosh) Leitch, 27 June 1985
Elsie McFarland, 24 July 1986
Juliet (Sutton) McMaster, 9 February 1985
Patricia (McCleary) Meadus, 21 March 1986
Katharine Moore, 4 September 1985
Susan Nattrass, 10 April 1986

Sandra (Hartley) O'Brien, 13 February 1986
Jean Elizabeth Robertson, 10 June 1985
Gail Ross, 19 September 1986
Debra Shogan, 17 February 1986
Evelyn Silk, 26 June 1986
Gwen Smith, 21 October 1985
Beverly (Richard) Spencer, 3 March 1986
Ursula (McLatchie) Sterling, 9 April 1986

Included in the project but not interviewed

Gladys (Fry) Douglas
Patricia Austin

*The Campus History
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and funded by New
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Nora Forster

Interview Questionnaire

A. Personal Experience

1. What sports did you engage in: (a) as a child; (b) as a teenager; (c) as a university student; (d) as a graduate.
2. When did you become interested in sport?
3. In what sports did you excel?
4. Could you elaborate on both the high and low points in your career in sports?
5. Could you elaborate on any recognition and awards that you received through your sport career?
6. Did you experience any disappointments during your sport career?

B. Support in Career

1. Who or what gave you the greatest opportunity to develop your talents?
2. What facilities were available to you in the beginning of your career and later on at university?
3. What kind of training did you have?
4. Who gave you the most support and encouragement?

5. Did you receive any financial support?
[If YES, was it (a) public; and/or (b) private, personal?]
6. Was necessary equipment available? If so, what kind?
7. What opportunities for competitions which required travelling were provided?
8. What coaching was available?
9. How supportive was the national organization in your chosen sport?
10. What hindrances, especially for women, did you encounter in your chosen sport?

C. Current Viewpoints on Female Sport Participation

1. Are you involved in sports at the present time?
2. Since your active participation in your chosen sport, can you describe any changes in equipment, opportunities, and the sport overall?
3. Are there any other developments you can think of?

D. Other Opinions

1. How could sport facilities be improved for women?
2. What are the general trends in women's sports now?
3. How has the participation in sport helped in your personal development as an individual?
4. What do you perceive as an ideal situation for women's participation in sport?
5. To what extent did you achieve the goals you set for yourself through your participation in sport?

Biographical Information:

Date: _____

Name: _____

Father's Name: _____

Mother's Name: _____

Birthplace: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Details of Education and Dates:

Elementary: _____

High School: _____

University: _____

Spouse's Name (*if applicable*): _____

Sports Participated in:

Achievements or Honours in Sports:

Other Involvement in Sports (*e.g., Teaching, Coaching, Competition, etc.*):

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Recording the history of women in sport at the University of Alberta was the idea of the Campus History Group of the U of A's Faculty Women's Club. The committee consists of five energetic women: Esther Kreisel, Muriel Affleck, Marianne Elder, Saretta Sparling and Pat Dobson. They gave themselves the task of conducting tape-recorded interviews of most of the thirty-four women whose voices are heard in this report.

It is always helpful, but often surprising, when five people engaged in one project can find a common sense of direction. This project, having so many possible directions, was an especially difficult one to envision in its complete form, but I believe the Campus History Group succeeded in doing so. From the outset, they wanted a history which would focus on the contributions of U of A women, whether as teachers, coaches, academics, or performers, to the history of sport at the U of A and in the larger community. The committee also wanted to enlarge these women's stories—to place them in an historical context which would reveal the changes that have taken place for women in both sport and society since the U of A opened in 1908. Finally, they wanted to look to the future and assess what trends were in progress, what women might wish or expect for their sporting lives, and what it might mean for them.

It is my own wish that the expectations of the Campus History Group for their project have been realized in this book.

Kate Lamont